

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

A Lyrical Drama

BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

EDITED BY

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PREFACE.

No student's edition exists of the Prometheus Unbound, the greatest work of Shelley. Because of its length, abstruseness, and difficulty, the drama has been little used in the classroom: and, indeed, while its æsthetic glory has been fully recognized, its spiritual and historical significance has till lately been often ignored, even by lovers of Shelley. Yet the Prometheus Unbound gives perhaps the most perfect expression anywhere to be found of the thought and passion of a great period of English poetry. It fully initiates the earnest student into the ideals of the Revolution — those ideals which, in their development, are determining the trend of our modern life. There is no need to speak of the imaginative fervor and pure lyricism of the drama: few English poems can be more effective to quicken and train æsthetic sensitiveness. So far as difficulty is concerned, the student who can understand the Faery Queene can understand the Prometheus Unbound.

It is hoped that the present edition may make the poem more widely known to the general reader, and more available for purposes of the classroom. The aim has been to supply

a good critical apparatus for the study of the drama as a work of art and as an historic product. To this end, the Introduction discusses the different aspects of the drama, and the Notes deal largely with suggestions for comparative study and with extracts from the best criticisms on the poem. Mythological and historic allusions to be found in ordinary reference-books are not explained.

The text followed is that of Forman's edition, except in two or three instances where a different reading has been adopted. Such instances are always mentioned in the Notes.

Much help has of course been derived from the critics and interpreters of Shelley, especially from Todhunter, Rossetti, James Thomson, Dowden, and Symonds. For the "Suggestions towards a Comparison of the Prometheus *Unbound of Shelley with the Prometheus Bound of Æschylus*," I am indebted to the work of my friend, Miss Lucy H. Smith, A.B.

VIDA D. SCUDDER.

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INTRODUCTION.

I.

THE DRAMA AND THE TIME.

SHELLEY's *lyrical drama, the Prometheus Unbound*, is unique in the great cycle of English song. From the larger part of that song it is distinguished at once by an audacious idealism. Generalizations are dangerous, yet we may surely say that the dominant trend of our sturdy English literature has been towards realism. In the Middle Ages, English Chaucer sings with frank and buoyant vigor of the fair green earth beneath him and the men and women at his side, while Italian Dante penetrates with fervid passion the spiritual spheres open to mediæval vision, and brings back strange messages from the souls of the lost and of the blessed. The Elizabethan imagination claps a girdle round the earth, but rarely soars into the heavens. It is the German genius, not the English, which expresses the struggle of the human soul in a shadowy protagonist, embodiment of the symbolism of the ages, and replaces a Hamlet known to history by a legendary Faust. The idealism of Milton seems, beside that of Dante, intellectual and forced. The literature of the eighteenth century is the transcript of the life of society; Victorian literature is the transcript of the life of the

soul. Everywhere our English genius tends to express itself through forms of experience and of fact.

The early poetry of the nineteenth century is a notable exception to this principle. The work of Wordsworth and Coleridge, of Keats and Shelley, is in tone frankly ideal. The idealism which pervades all the writings of these poets, from the Ancient Mariner to Hyperion, finds its fullest and most glorious manifestation in the Prometheus Unbound, which is the supreme achievement of Shelley. Despite the wondrous nature-poetry of the drama, the whole action takes place, not on this solid earth of hill and forest, but in an unknown region which has no existence outside the soul of man. The personages are vast abstractions, dim though luminous; like wraiths of mist in morning sunlight they drift around us, appearing, vanishing, in mystic sequence. Over the whole drama plays, though with broken and wavering lustre, the "light that never was on sea or land," and not once does the "poet's dream" change to the sober world of waking fact.

Yet to speak of the Prometheus Unbound as the highest expression of modern English idealism is hardly to justify our claim that the drama is unique. We find much contemporary poetry of the same order, although less great; and our English genius is, moreover, too plastic to lack entirely, at any period, the ideal element. It is in a work of the sixteenth century that we find the closest parallel to the Prometheus Unbound. Edmund Spenser, during the full dominance of Elizabethan realism, is as pure an idealist as Shelley, and the Faery Queene and the modern drama are in many ways strangely akin. At a glance, this kinship is obvious. The two poems belong alike to that highest

order of imaginative work which includes the Book of Job, Faust, Paracelsus, and claims as its greatest example the Divine Comedy of Dante. Both poems deal with spiritual forces, with the eternal conflict of good and evil; the action to be wrought out is in both the final redemption of the soul of man. The Faery Queene, like the Prometheus, transports us to an unreal world, where forms of visionary beauty speak to us, not of concrete human life, but of ethical and spiritual truth. Both poems, in a word, are symbolic.

Yet the more thoughtfully we read, the sooner will a radical difference between the spirit of the two poems become manifest,—a difference so great that it will force us to put the poem of Shelley quite by itself. For the Faery Queene is an allegory: the Prometheus Unbound not only deals with mythological conceptions, it is a genuine myth.

In the Faery Queene, the relation of the forms to the ideas is the result of the conscious and deliberate invention of Spenser. Una, says the poet to himself, shall stand for Truth, Guyon for Temperance, Archimago for Hypocrisy. The characters, thus laden with double meaning, are made to pass through various significant adventures. Sometimes the allegory grows tedious to Spenser, and he drops it from consciousness, seeing for the time in his creations only ladies fair and lovely knights, instead of the Christian virtues; more often still it grows tedious to the reader, who gladly forgets all didactic suggestion, to wander dreamily through an enchanted land. The connection between story and meaning, not only here but in all allegories, is arbitrary rather than essential.

No one can read the Prometheus Unbound without feeling a different method of conception at work. Asia, Ione,

Panthea, Prometheus himself, all the actors in the drama, are indeed impersonations of abstract qualities, and the whole action is spiritual in undercurrent, though on the surface natural. But the connection between natural and spiritual is no longer arbitrary. There has been no painful invention, unless in some minor details; these figures have flashed upon the inner vision of the poet in perfect unity of soul and form. Where an allegory is reasoned and labored, a myth is instinctive and spontaneous. The systematic formality of the allegory is replaced in the myth by something of the large, divinely simple significance of the very symbolism of nature. An allegory is the result of experience; a myth, of intuition.

Now, to speak of the Prometheus Unbound as a myth seems at first sight to involve a contradiction. It is inconsistent with our idea of poetic development; for the evolution of the myth is almost entirely confined to the childhood of races. This is inevitable, since the myth is an unconscious form of art, and unconsciousness belongs to childhood. The wide-eyed and reverent wonder of the child sees in this new world of life and mystery around him spiritual creations pressing everywhere through the material veil. His instinctive faith cannot survive the familiarity with earthly facts, the scientific temper, of maturity. Analysis has replaced intuition; wonder is lost in curiosity.—

"There was an awful rainbow full in Heaven:
We know its name and nature; it is given
In the dull catalogue of common things,"

mourns Keats. Thus it is in the infancy of the Aryan race, in the early days of Hellas, in the vigorous youth of the

Norsemen, that we find the great myth cycles treasured by our scholars to-day, — poem-stories, with the dawn-light fresh upon them. Through our own oldest epic, Beowulf, even yet flash traces of the myth; but they soon fade out, never to reappear, replaced by the frank and sunny naturalism of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Browning.

Never to reappear? Not so. In the early days of our own century, when the English race had passed through many a stern experience, when it had gathered much of the bitter wisdom of maturity into its thought and speech, once more it was to dream dreams and see visions, and the fairest of these dreams was to be given to the world through the poet-soul of Shelley, a genuine and beautiful myth, in the form of the Prometheus Unbound Prometheus, Asia, Ione, — their likeness is to be sought, not in a Macbeth, a Desdemona, or a Pompilia, but in Thetis the silver-footed, in Perseus, slayer of the Gorgon, in Athene, child of Zeus. The mystic action of the drama recalls, not the human stir and passion of our modern tragedy, but the solemn movement of the stories of the elder world. The Prometheus Unbound is no mere retelling of an ancient tale, like the *Greek poems of William Morris; it is in all essentials an* original conception. The drama starts, indeed, from the Æschylean story, but the development of the action, the personages, the mode of treatment, are absolutely the poet's own. Like the tales of gods and heroes in the Homeric cycle, even more like the treatment of these stories with a fuller spiritual consciousness in the work of the Greek tragedians, are the great imaginings of Shelley

The age of Pope and the age of Tennyson are both times of peculiar self-consciousness and elaboration. Between

these two ages reappears, for one brief moment, the myth. In the whole history of English song there is no stranger paradox than this. It challenges our attention at once. If we wish to understand it, we first turn instinctively to the great poetry which comes within the same period as the Prometheus.

The drama was written in 1819; thus it belongs to the greatest cycle of English song since the Elizabethan age. Within the years 1590–1630 falls the chief work of Spenser, of the Elizabethan lyrists, of Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson. Within the years 1790–1830 falls the finest work of Blake and Burns, of Wordsworth and Coleridge, of Byron, Keats, and Shelley. We know now that those years at the beginning of our century were great indeed; we know that the poems sung in them hold their own even by the side of the wonderful poetry of three centuries before. If we look at the poetic work of the first third of our century as a whole, we shall be struck by its great variety; yet we shall also be struck, in the midst of all the variety, by a certain all-pervasive unity of tone. It is the tone of youth, of freshness, of exuberance of life.

The poetry of the eighteenth century was tired. It had repeated the wisdom of a worldly old age. It laid stress on etiquette, on custom, on detail; it submitted to cautious rules; and, when not artificially lively, it displayed a sober and disillusioned strength. Close now Pope or Thomson, and open Blake, Burns, Wordsworth. Strange discovery! Through this poetry, later though it be, the music of an eternal youth goes ringing. The tone of wonder, of eagerness, of fulness of life, either for joy or pain, is the great quality which distinguishes the outburst of song at the first

of our century from the exhausted verse of the preceding age. It is impossible to tell all the different manifestations of this new youthfulness. The very cadence, the outward form of verse, have cast aside the grave restrictions imposed by a self-conscious period, and move with the buoyant and varied grace of adolescence; the literal child appears for the first time in Burns and Blake and Wordsworth; the restless and passionate speculation of youth glances through the poems of Byron, Coleridge, and Shelley. Finally, the mythopœic faculty is by no means confined to the Prometheus Unbound, though it finds fullest expression there. There is no evidence of this faculty in the poetry of the eighteenth century, or of the Victorian age. but poetry from Blake to Keats is veined with it. In Blake, indeed, it is dominant, but fails to reach its full effect, because his imaginings, though mighty, are broken and obscure. We find clear traces of the myth in the poems of Coleridge, notably the Ancient Mariner. Keats is not sensitive to the spiritual possibilities of the myth, but, so far as æsthetic instinct will carry him, he has the true myth-creating power, gods, nymphs, and Titans breathe in living beauty in the pages of Endymion and Hyperion. To Shelley, as to the ancient Greeks, the myth is the expression of worship, and the mythopœic faculty appears, disciplined, free, and triumphant, in the Prometheus Unbound

How shall we explain the bright youthfulness of all this poetry? We must explain it by studying the historic period from which it sprang. For poetry strikes its roots deep into the soil of national life, and it is from the passions and ideals of history that we must find the inspiration of our poets. English verse at the beginning of the century is great be-

cause it is the expression and outcome of a great period. No sooner do we study the period than the distinctive qualities of the poetry are explained. Its renewed joy and freedom are but the expression of the new life that was pulsing through the veins of the old earth. For this is the great period of the birth of the modern world.

We may best understand the Prometheus Unbound if we recognize it as the supreme expression in imaginative form of the new spirit of democracy. The ideas which inspire it first found dynamic power in the Revolution of 1789. Thus the significance of our paradox is revealed. For myths belong to the dawn; and the beginning of our century witnessed the dawn of a new cosmic day. We may say in sober reverence that not since the coming of Christ had so vital a renovating power entered human life as entered it one hundred years ago. It is natural and beautiful that this new beginning should be heralded by the return of the spirit of childhood, and that the wondering faith of the time should once more as in the days of old find expression through concrete symbol. At one moment and one only in the evolution of English song since the time of Beowulf, was possible the formation of a myth; and at this moment appeared the man to create it. Only at the beginning of the nineteenth century, only by the man Shelley, could the Prometheus Unbound have been written.

This view of the Prometheus Unbound will, it is true, be challenged by a whole school of critics. The drama is woven of dreams, they will tell us; it is a maze of color and music, devoid of definite structure. Shall we turn the most ethereal of poets into a doctrinaire? What relation has poetry like this, of imagination all compact, to theories of

life? Above all, what relation can it bear to that democracy which is all around us, practical, blatant, vulgar? The eternal value of the Prometheus Unbound—thus perhaps say most of the readers of the drama—lies in its poignant melody, its exquisite imagery, in the wondrous beauty of fragments scattered here and there through the poem These are immortal. But the intellectual conceptions of Shelley were simply the accidents of his youth, to be forgotten if we would read his poetry aright; and for the underlying thought of the drama, for its unity of structure, for the meaning of Prometheus and Demogorgon and Panthea and the other shadowy mouth-pieces of matchless verse, not one whit will the enlightened critic care.

Thus to speak is to deny all scientific conceptions of literature, for it is to deny the connection of the poet with his age. Much, indeed, is crude and weak in the verse of Shelley, much is held in his immature intellect, and is never fused by his imaginative passion into art, but the very warp and woof of his noblest poetry is in subtle and secret ways determined by that faith which æsthetic cynics would teach us to ignore Shelley would never have been the greatest lyric poet of England, would never have written the Ode to the West Wind nor the choruses to Hellas, had he been [illegible] aristocrat and a conservative. The passion for freed[illegible] the aspiration towards a universal love sway his [illegible] they sway his form.

In order, then, to understand the Prome[illegible] we must look more fully at the place he [illegible] by Shelley in the evolution of the dem[illegible] by France that the idea was first [illegible] —deeds stormy, passionate [illegible]

shed. France, most impetuous of nations, France, maddened by centuries of oppression, received the trust of working out the historic revolution. But this was only half of the work to be accomplished. To express the democratic idea in brief, historic act was the work of France; to express it in eternal art was the work of England. All poetry, says Wordsworth, is the product of emotion recollected in tranquillity. France, absorbed in fierce and exhausting struggle, could not stop to write poetry; yet the idea of democracy, like all really vital ideas, had to find expression in art before it could become a precious possession forever to the nations. Here came in the work of England. Her noblest children, touched to high and tense emotion by the great days in which they lived, were yet sufficiently remote from the struggle to possess their souls in that serenity which is the necessary condition of all great art. To the poets of England, from Burns and Blake to Shelley, belongs the glory of having first given to the democratic idea an embodiment of undying power.

Very diverse is the influence of the new ideal upon their work. Wordsworth and Coleridge, the two older poets, were contemporaries of the historic revolution. In the eager days of their youth they lived through the swift revolutionary drama, with its changes from rapturous hope to terror and despair. Absorbed in the turmoil of the time, there is small wonder that they were unable to distinguish the absolute from the local, or that they reacted, in sober middle life, from the ardor of their democratic faith. The effect of democracy in the work even of Wordsworth is indirect, although profound, and shows itself rather by leading the imaginative love of the poet to the noble life of the simple and the poor than by in-

flaming him with enthusiasm for the grand abstract ideas of the Revolution. The few poems of both Wordsworth and Coleridge which treat directly of the new faith are occasional in theme. We must seek a point of view which affords a farther perspective, if we desire a vision of the democratic faith in its fulness, freed from the dominance of incidental detail.

Such a point of view was to be found in the second decade of our century. Three men, in this decade, hold the supreme honors of English song, Byron, Keats, and Shelley. Of these, Keats represents the æsthetic reaction from the passion for humanity which had possessed the soul of the race for over twenty years. Through his verse sweeps the fragrance of the world of dreams, redolent of beauty, it nowhere breathes suggestion of allegiance to a hard-won truth, nor of feeling for actual human need. Byron, on the other hand, is distinctly a poet of the Revolution, but of the Revolution mainly on its inferior and destructive side. His verse rings with rebellion and despair. The historic revolution had failed, its ardent faith, its glowing hopes, were despised, during the hollow years of the Empire, by all children of the world. A child of the world was Byron, and for him and his fellows nothing was left at the heart of life but the cynical and arrogant individualism which forms the negative and evil aspect of the democratic idea.

The children of the world had lost courage, but for the children of light the glory of the new ideal had never faded. Hardly affected by the practical failure of the Revolution, freed from the interference of historic outward detail, the intellectual and spiritual conception of the young democracy shone clear in the cloudless heaven, for whosoever should behold.

The man to behold it was Shelley. His soul, pure as crystal, clear as flame, held and fused the vital elements both of strength and weakness in the democratic ideal. At the close of the second decade of our century he conceived the Prometheus Unbound.

The drama is in truth the perfect symbolic reflection of the conceptions of the new democracy, alike in their strength and in their weakness. We shall find it vague where the Revolution was vague, crude where the Revolution was crude, — that is, in its intellectual philosophy; we shall find it great where the revolution was great, — that is, in its spiritual ideal.

We see how completely the poem expresses the limitations as well as the power inherent in the new democratic conception when we recall, briefly, Shelley's faith and attitude. Shelley is democrat and communist. His convictions are frankly, eagerly anarchical. The ruling passion of his life is the passion for liberty, and liberty to him, as to most thinkers of the time, means the absence of law. He hates authority with a deadly hatred; it is by the overthrow of all government, civil or religious, that he expects the happiness of humanity to be attained. This destructive political conception is a simple reproduction of current ideas, or at least of the ideas of '93. On the ethical side, Shelley's thought was formed by two amusingly different influences, by William Godwin, his father-in-law, and by Plato. The result of this curious union was paradoxical enough. With all his conscious intellect, Shelley clings to the views of Political Justice, a book written by Godwin which expresses the coldest radicalism of revolutionary thought; but with every higher instinct, he springs to greet the mystic idealism of

Plato. The crudest and most unimaginative parts of the Prometheus Unbound reflect the cheap doctrinaire philosophy of Godwin,—a philosophy held in Shelley's mind, but never in his soul. The easy optimism of Godwin, and of all revolutionary thinkers, is the phase of their thought most congenial to Shelley. To the Revolution evil is a pure accident, an external fact. It inheres in institutions,—how it got there we are never told,—and when these institutions shall be shattered, the nature of man, pure, virtuous, loving, will instantly restore the Age of Gold. This conception determines the whole form of the myth in the Prometheus Unbound. Shallow though it seems to-day, it served a necessary purpose. It roused men from the lethargy of despair, and inspired them with faith in man's control over his own destiny. Like the apostolic expectation of the immediate coming of the Lord, the pathetic revolutionary optimism gave courage to an infant faith, and made men loyal to their ideals until the time should come when they could stand alone. It enabled them, in Shelley's words,

> "To hope, till hope creates,
> From its own wreck, the thing it contemplates"

There is another point in which Shelley's attitude is one with that of his time. his scornful rejection of Christianity. No one can read history without seeing that it was very difficult, in those days, to be both a democrat and a Christian. The Church had identified itself, in the Revolution, with the aristocrats It had chosen to side with established evil rather than with reform which disturbed peace. It had its reward. No one familiar with the respectable worldliness of the recognized religion of England during the first of our

century can wonder that many of the most vivid and religious minds of the day revolted from Christianity. Shelley, with characteristic vehemence, revolted to the very extreme.

But Shelley does not only reflect the intellectual attitude of the Revolution: he is also, and more completely, an exponent of its spiritual passion. So far as we have yet gone, we might have taken Byron as well as Shelley for our typical poet. Byron, too, had the frank antinomianism, the hatred of Christianity, found in the Revolution, though he lacked its buoyant optimism. But Byron was untouched by the higher elements of democratic thought, which exalt the poetry of Shelley. Through the Prometheus Unbound breathes the very spirit of the religion of humanity, the passionate sympathy for suffering, the passionate love of man. The power to conceive vast abstract ideals and to render them dynamic in human life was a gift of the Revolution, in reaction from the age of common sense; and this gift created the drama. Nor were there lacking in Shelley's poetry or in his life elements of a yet more spiritual worship. Like the great Jew Spinoza, he might be described as God-intoxicated. His reason might deny, but his imagination believed; and the imagination was the very centre of Shelley's nature. We may not perhaps follow Mr. Browning in his interesting suggestion that had Shelley lived he would have become a Christian; but we may, we must, remember the extreme youth of the poet when he died, and if we would be just, seek for his faith, not in the verse of crude reaction and boyish polemic, but in the expression of his moments of highest insight. Not by Queen Mab but by Epipsychidion and Adonais may we learn the soul of Shelley. His soul cannot be labelled; it is too bright and swift and strange

Such was the nature of the man who was tc preme exponent of the ideal of the new demo crude intellectual conceptions of the Revoluti Prometheus Unbound and weaken it; the sp tiveness and spiritual faith of the Revolution c vitally, and mould it to an organic whole. T thus singularly uneven. It forfeits at times all power; yet wherever this power diminishes, its gestiveness may be said to increase. By virtue very imperfections, by virtue supremely of the manity, the passion for freedom and the trium uality which suffuse it, it is the perfect artistic all that was most significant in the early aspects which has shaped our modern world.

Fitting it is and beautiful that to Shelley, of archy of poets then living, should have been gi sion of perfectly reflecting the dawn of the new Fair in undying youth, his figure stands before and ardent purity undimmed by the breath of seems at first bitter and cruel when, in his tl the Italian waters which he loved so well cl frail bark, and the poet-soul is borne darkly, into an unknown land. Yet, though he sings the sons of time, he rests, like his own Adona abodes where the Eternal are." Shelley's abru death is, we may almost say, the inevitable cor life whose work it was to render for us the eager ardent faith, of adolescence. The sober and p per of middle life, the meditative calm of age, touch his buoyant spirit. He heralded the sun task was over when he had sung his hymn of w

We have said that the Prometheus Unbound is a myth; and so it is. Yet its type is widely different from that of the great stories of the elder world. In our modern days we cannot expect, we could assuredly not desire, the perfect reproduction of an ancient poem. The Prometheus Unbound is both greater and less than the early dreams of Hellas. In some ways it is less. Inspired as a rule by spontaneous insight, it is yet beset now and again by a clogging self-consciousness, and the poetry sinks into allegory, or, lower yet, into versified didacticism. Moreover, the drama tantalizes us with an occasional vagueness and inconsistency foreign to the ancient myth. Yet if in these ways it is inferior, in others it is instinct with a deeper power. The past can never be relived. The Prometheus is truly a poem of youth, but the youth which inspires it is not that of the first childhood of the race. The world was, indeed, born anew in those great years at the first of the century; but this its new birth was the birth of the Spirit. The free naturalism, strong, simple, and buoyant, that breathes through the myths of Greece was fled forever. The rapture of physical existence is replaced in all our later poetry by the rapture of a spiritual hope. Grave, with all its joyous melody, is the music of the Prometheus; the pain that sounds through the drama has a deeper note than the wistful grief of the child, in the eyes of Prometheus and Asia is seen the shadow of a suffering world. The ideal towards which the drama presses is far different from the temperate uprightness of the Greeks; it is no less than absolute union with the spirit of Divine Love. For the time when the Prometheus Unbound is written is the nineteenth Christian century, and the vision of holiness has been beheld by the world.

The century has grown old since Shelley wrote. The characteristic utterance of its central and final years has been that of men. A Rabbi Ben Ezra reviews life in memory, as a Prometheus looked forward to life in hope. Browning and Tennyson have reverted to that virile realism which is the most instinctive expression of our English genius; and this realism tends to express itself in practical rather than in æsthetic forms. That ideal which flashed upon men of old as a vision, we struggle as a fact to fulfil. For them were the hours of insight; for us are the hours of gloom.

"With aching hands and bleeding feet
We dig and heap, pile stone on stone;
We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day, and wish 'twere done."

While we wait for the "hours of light" to return, it is well for us always to remember that what we are striving to realize already exists as a vision. The dream-images of superhuman beauty, the ardent abstract enthusiasm, which we find in Shelley, are in truth the sources and inspiration of that stern democracy which, often in painful forms, struggles towards a future that we can still but dimly see. The economic science of to-day and the imaginative passion of the past are in aim and essence one. We can no longer console ourselves for unclean tenements by dreams of the union of Prometheus and Asia; but we may, in sober, dusty days of discouraged labor, refresh our spirits and revive our faith by turning to the glory of the morning, and steeping our eyes in the vision of an eternal prime.

II.

A STUDY OF THE MYTH.

THE student who tries to translate the fleeting symbolism of the drama into a logical sequence of abstract truths will be grievously disappointed. Such a translation is impossible. The union of soul and form, meaning and expression, is too close to be severed. It has to be seized, not by the analytical reason, but by an intuition akin to that of the poet. We are tempted to describe the myth in Shelley's own dazzling words.—

> "Child of light! thy limbs are burning
>   Through the vest which seems to hide them,
> As the radiant lines of morning
>   Through thin clouds, ere they divide them,
> And this atmosphere divinest
> Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest."

To conceal while it reveals is always the characteristic of the myth. The drama transports us to the very confines of the world of sense, where material semblance trembles into spiritual truth, but the limit is never quite crossed, the reticence of the image is never forfeited. "As dew-stars glisten, then fade away," gleams of spiritual meaning flash and vanish through the poem. The imagination everywhere suggests what the intellect cannot define.

We must acknowledge another reason for the obscurity of many passages in the Prometheus. The drama is uneven both in form and thought; and one is sometimes tempted to linger in search of hidden depth of meaning, when true wisdom would recognize a passage as impenetrable simply because shallow. It is because of this twofold difficulty in logical interpretation that many, even among the lovers of Shelley, give up the attempt to trace the evolution of any theme, and enjoy the drama simply as a succession of shining pictures and lovely melodies. Yet in reality the drama is a highly organized whole, conceived with the greatest care and with elaborate fulness of meaning. We know, on Mrs. Shelley's authority, that Shelley wrote every detail of the poem with distinct intention. His sensitive soul was attuned not only to harmonies of light and color, but to the severer music of the experiences of life. Such a nature is no pioneer in constructive ideas. We do not look in Shelley for the virile intellectuality, the grasp on practical problems, of Browning; but we do seek and find that intuitive reflection of the vital elements in contemporary life and thought which is characteristic of the seer.

Now, although in many a detail the meaning of the myth eludes us, in grand outlines it may be traced. Without trying to translate the poem into a series of moral maxims, it is quite possible to apprehend something of the broader relations which its imagery bears to the facts of human life. Such an apprehension is essential to the best enjoyment of the drama.

Shelley takes as his starting-point the old story of Prometheus, as found in the drama of Æschylus. Prometheus the Titan has stolen fire from heaven to benefit the race of man.

In punishment Jupiter nails him high on a cliff of Caucasus, where he hangs, suffering tortures untold. He possesses a secret which, if revealed, will ward off from Jupiter some unknown and terrible danger; with this secret he refuses to part. These broad and simple facts Shelley adopts from the old Greek myth, then, with an audacious license born of the Revolution, he modifies, enlarges, innovates, to suit his own desires, till the glowing and complex phantasmagoria of his drama bears likeness slight indeed to the grave and simple austerity of the Æschylean treatment.

When the drama opens, Prometheus, great protagonist of humanity, hangs on his mount of torture, high above the outspread world. But he is not alone. Sister-spirits, Ione and Panthea — fair forms with drooping wings — sit watchful at his feet. They may be with him · another presence, dearer than theirs, is denied. Asia, their great sister, the beloved of Prometheus, awaits afar in sorrow; and the bitterest element in the suffering of the Titan is the separation decreed between himself and her

This first act may be entitled "The Torture of Prometheus." The agony which Jupiter has power to inflict shall reach its bitter climax here. Prometheus, disciplined by æons of silent pain, has attained a new point of development. After a grand opening soliloquy, he utters a petition. At the moment of his capture he has hurled defiance at Jupiter, his foe, in a terrific curse. This curse he would now recall. Hatred has left his soul, even the words of wrath and contempt he has forgotten. Let them be repeated, that he may revoke them and thus remain free from the taint of revenge. But it is in vain that he entreats all powers of earth and air to repeat the curse to him. They remember

it well; repeat it they dare not; till at last, from a strange underworld of shadows, the Phantasm of Jupiter appears, proud and calm, and pronounces the dread words. Prometheus in pity recalls them. Jupiter, from Olympus, cognizant doubtless of all that passes on the Mount, and thinking the revocation to betoken relenting on the part of Prometheus, sends Mercury swiftly down to extort the longed-for secret, and to inflict new pains if the Titan prove rebellious. Him Prometheus repulses with words of lofty scorn and invulnerable will. Forgiveness has implied no weakening of his firm integrity. Then comes the great scene of torture. Throngs of Furies—awful Forms of Darkness—surge upward from the abyss. They press around Prometheus, a stifling, evil crowd; they taunt him, they revile, they torment. Every spiritual agony that the soul can know do they inflict upon him. Yet though his soul is sorrowful unto death, it is not conquered. To the temptation of despair he does not yield, if despair mean the loss of inward loyalty to truth and right; and the baffled Furies vanish in rage. Then gather to console the weary Titan a troop of exquisite spirits. Their gentle songs soothe though they cannot cheer the exhausted soul of the sufferer. He hangs, weary, yet at peace; the morning slowly dawns; and we leave him as his wistful thoughts turn towards Asia and towards Love.

If the first act is "The Torture of Prometheus," the second may be called "The Journey of Asia." It is around her figure that action now centres. In the beginning of the act we find her waiting in an Indian vale, whose luxuriant beauty contrasts strangely with the bleak ravine where Prometheus suffers. Yet Asia, too, is sorrowful, though her sorrow is passive. Separated from Prometheus, she languidly

waits and dreams. She is to learn that her mission is not only to endure but to act, and through action to save the world.

The moment is sunrise. Panthea comes, with messages from Prometheus. Panthea, as our detailed study will show us, is the Spirit of Intuition, or Faith, which ever mediates between the soul of man and its ideal. She has strange dreams to narrate — dreams of mystic meaning that summon to an action unknown. In the eyes of Panthea, Asia beholds these dreams. The first is the Vision of Fulfilment, — Prometheus joyous and free. The second is the Dream of Progress, and as Asia beholds it, the impulses of her own brooding heart become clear to her. The cliffs around become vocal with echoes that call on her to go forth. She must hence, she knows not whither. Nature, which has been but the passive reflection of her beauty, becomes charged with spiritual significance. It stings with hunger for full light, it murmurs a message half-understood of a task that awaits, a reward to be won We are here, in the drama of spiritual evolution, at the great point of the awakening of consciousness Driven by an imperious inward stress, Asia seizes the hand of Panthea, and with her starts on a strange journey. Through the dark forest of human experience they wander, — bound, though they know it not, on a pilgrimage of redemption. They pause on a mountain summit, and, abandoning self-guidance, yield in meekness to radiant spirit-forces not their own. Into the secret abysses of Being they are carried, to the presence of the awful Demogorgon, the unseen Fate that dwells in darkness. This descent of Asia to the cave of Demogorgon *recalls the descent of Faust to the "Mothers".*

roots of things — in the second part of Faust; it recalls yet more forcibly that fairest myth of the ancient world, the descent of Psyche to the shades of Avernus.

In the presence of this oracular Darkness, which is yet a Living Spirit, Asia seeks satisfaction in her perplexed broodings over life and evil, and finally questions the fate of Prometheus and herself. The answers come in deed, not word. Swiftly appears a vision of the Cars of the Hours; swiftly the awful Form of Demogorgon floats upward to the car of darkness, while Asia and Panthea, transported to a shining chariot, are whirled more swiftly than the lightning to a mystic mount. Then comes the great consummation of the drama. Asia is transfigured before us. Her being glows with a strange radiance, so intense that it hides her from the view. A Voice — the Voice of Prometheus — is heard chanting to her a worshipful lyric, the highest expression alike of Shelley's genius and of his faith; and with her responsive song, of almost equal beauty, and of profound meaning, the act concludes.

The apotheosis of Asia is the climax of the spiritual drama. But in the third act we witness the Fall of Jupiter and the Liberation of Prometheus. Jupiter has just married Thetis. The child of this union (here is the secret which Prometheus has so persistently withheld) is to destroy his father. Strange child! For in truth he is no other than an incarnation of Demogorgon. In a horror of great darkness he ascends to the resplendent throne of the world's ruler and pronounces doom. Scorn avails nothing, the weapons of the gods are futile, futile thunderbolts and prayers. The curse is fulfilled. From high heaven Jupiter falls into the abyss, —

"And like a cloud his enemy above
Darkens his fall with victory."

Hercules releases Prometheus, who, reunited to Asia, enters upon an existence of limitless freedom and perfect love. The Spirit of the Hour speeds, proclaiming redemption over land and sea; and with a long passage describing the joyful effects of his tidings the act concludes. The fourth act was an afterthought which we could ill afford to miss. It is a triumphal chorus of rejoicing. All powers of earth and air, of the natural and the spiritual world, unite in a wondrous pæan that for depth and variety of music, for beauty of imagery, for the expression of rapturous gladness, finds no parallel in English verse. It is to music rather than to literature that we must look for the analogues of poetry such as this

Here, then, in broad outline, is the story of the Prometheus Unbound. Many details it has which we have not mentioned, but these will fall into place in the study of the drama itself. What, now, is its meaning? Is it anything more than a panorama of glowing forms and a sequence of wondrous melodies? And if so, what?

It is a drama of the redemption of humanity; and the need and method of redemption are conceived as they could be conceived under the influence of the new democratic faith alone.

Prometheus is the representative of all humanity. He suffers, oppressed by the tyranny of Jupiter, yet it is from Prometheus himself—and in this Shelley follows the Greek myth—that all the power of Jupiter is derived We must be careful not to consider Jupiter as the abstract power of moral evil. To Shelley his significance is mainly, perhaps,

political. A few lines near the conclusion of the drama give the clew to him: —

> "Those foul shapes, abhorred by god and man,
> Which, under many a name and many a form,
> Strange, savage, ghastly, dark, and execrable,
> Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the world."

He stands for all those institutions, civil and religious, which were once the true expression of the will of man, but which, as the centuries have passed, become effete forms, still powerful to bind, and with an innate tendency to repress progress. "Thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons,"— these, in one grand composite, comprising as they do all the forms by which man has projected into the world the authority of Law, unite in the idea of Jupiter. But while Jupiter has thus rather an historic and outward than an ethical and inward meaning, we must not forget that he practically represents all the evil recognized by the poet; for "Shelley believed," so Mrs. Shelley tells us, "that mankind had only to will that there should be no evil and there would be none." Evil is an accident of the outer life, and thus, naturally enough, inheres exclusively in that outward authority which checks the free play of impulse. The evil Jupiter, thus conceived, is a shadowy creature enough. Almost may we say that he has no real existence, and accordingly throughout the drama he never possesses the imagination. It is by his own weight that he falls. He is made, in the first act, to pronounce his own curse, and his destruction is wrought by his offspring. In the marriage of Jupiter and Thetis, Shelley seems to portray the overweening arrogance and ὕβρις through which a political tyranny invests itself with the pomp of false glory,

obvious cause is the overweening arrogance of Jupiter; but another more potent cause lies deep in the secret mysteries of being. For in the abode of darkness, Asia, Spirit of Divine Love, has met Demogorgon. Face to face she has spoken with him; and it is only after this interview that the "mighty shadow" floats upward from his throne. Surely the poet here means to image to us the profound truth, that it is only through contact with emotion that abstract thought can become roused to action and appear in the sphere of practical life, a vital and dynamic power. We have here a clear suggestion of that revolutionary process by which the frigid and inert reasoning of Voltaire and his kin, becoming charged with passion, overthrew the ancient world.

Thus the self-destruction of evil is accomplished, and on the negative side the process of redemption is complete: but in the evolution of the myth there is another and positive aspect of far greater beauty. The uplift of humanity is achieved not only through the overthrow of evil but through the active force of good. Not directly through the action of Prometheus. True to his doctrine of non-resistance, Shelley allows his Titan to play no part in his own salvation, unless by the patient and heroic endurance of his pain. Through Asia, the spirit of celestial love, shall redemption be worked out: Asia, the Light of Life, highest embodiment in Shelley's poetry of that Ideal towards which his worship ever ascends.

The second act, in which the myth of Asia is unfolded, is poetically the most wonderful in the Prometheus Unbound,—that is to say, in the whole cycle of English song. The verse palpitates with spiritual meaning, profound yet elusive. It dazzles us like the sky at sunrise, yet like the sky at sunrise purges our eyes to clearer sight. It is a myth

of spiritual evolution, dealing with the moment when Love, hitherto content to dream and suffer, is aroused to action and to thought. We have already spoken of the long journey to which the sister-spirits, Love and Faith, are driven by their dreams and by the voices of nature. At last, as we saw, they are drawn downward into the abysses of being. Asia stands before Demogorgon; Love questions Ancient Wisdom. She asks a solution of the problems of existence,—asks and is answered. The response does but corroborate the yearning intuition of her own heart. Love is supreme, Love is eternal! This is the deepest word the human reason deigns to speak. And it is enough. Demogorgon, as we saw, is roused to activity by his meeting with Asia. To Asia, also, the interview is a crisis If reason must be charged with passion before it can prevail, love on the other hand must become instinct with wisdom before it can be made manifest in that glory which shall save the world. Yet this new wisdom does but reiterate the primal instinct of Love. Tennyson's In Memoriam is the typical poem of the middle of the century, as Shelley's Prometheus Unbound of its earlier years. And the central message of both poems is the same. Love Immortal is sung by both alike; Love discerned immortal first by the yearning of the eager heart, proved immortal only by wearisome journey of thought through the dark and lonely regions of soul-experience. After her interview with Demogorgon, the power of Asia is set free. Love is transfigured. Its rosy warmth pervades the whole creation, and its power is revealed triumphantly supreme. This is the act through which, in the secret mystery of creation, the redemption of Prometheus is achieved. Thus through a double process, destructive and

constructive, — by revolution and by love, — is set free the human soul. At this point, the Prometheus Unbound ceases to be great. When redemption is achieved, when the drama turns from hope and endurance, and endeavors to picture fulfilment, the poem drops into bathos. Weak, sentimental, empty, — guilty of that worst of æsthetic sins, prettiness, — is Shelley's description of the ideal state. After their titanic throes, their radiant achievement, Prometheus and Asia are united. Surely the progressive rapture of their life will at least in glorious hint form the conclusion of the drama. Not so. They retire to a certain cave; there, like Arcadian shepherd and shepherdess, they live their passive days, listening to the echoes of the human world and finding supreme joy in the development of the arts. For a regenerate humanity, Shelley had no message. His ideal is radically unprogressive, — the return to a Golden Age of pastoral innocence, rather than the advance into new regions of material and spiritual conquest. "Equal, unclassed, tribeless and nationless, exempt from awe, worship, degree," is the humanity of the future; and the poetry is flat, the thought is even flatter, in which its life is described.

In part, this descent into bathos is inevitable. All attempts to describe an unknown millennium must needs be futile; even the Apocalypse deals only in guarded and reverent symbol, and all uninspired books, from Plato to "News from Nowhere," fail to attract us from our present miseries to their insipid ideal. Yet Shelley's presentation has a peculiar weakness. It is the weakness inherent in the whole Revolutionary ideal, and may be summed up in two defects. We have hinted at both of them before. The first defect is the entire absence in the Prometheus Unbound

of the modern scientific conception of Law and Evolution; the second is the vagueness of the religious ideas of the poem. The idea of progressive development was unknown to the men of the Revolution. In their thought, salvation was to be reached by a sudden overthrow of tyrants rather than by a slow and constructive upbuilding. The ideal state, when reached, was to be one of stagnant and empty enjoyment, rather than one of continual advance through struggle. All development is conditioned by law, and the thought of law is abhorrent to them The invertebrate society described in the third act of the Prometheus Unbound is the inevitable outcome of a state of pure anarchy; and anarchy as an ideal ought to have been made impossible for us to-day by the teachings of modern science. Yet what we miss in the Prometheus Unbound is deeper even than the sense of the sacredness of law or the grandeur of development. We feel the lack of any definiteness in the religious thought of the poem. The interpretation of evil is hopelessly superficial; not only does it ignore the scientific aspect of evil as imperfect development, but also the far deeper and truer aspect of evil as Sin. To represent outward authority as the only force that hampers the free purity of man, is simply to be false to fact. The absence, in the drama, of any outlook towards immortality or any suggestion of the Divine Fatherhood is the final source of its weakness. Shut off from any hope of endless growth towards an infinite perfection in the hereafter, shut in upon himself with no personal ideal towards which he can strive, nor spiritual strength on which he can depend, it is no wonder that man, as Shelley depicts him, is a creature of no personality, scarcely higher, except for his æsthetic instincts, than an amiable brute

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Thus the crudity of the Prometheus Unbound is the crudity of the Revolution: its strength also is largely the strength of the Revolution. When we look upon the drama as a whole, the surface inconsistencies, the deeper errors, vanish from our thoughts, and leave a work of resplendent insight. The weakness is of the intellect; the strength is of the spirit.

The controlling inspiration of Shelley's verse is the great passion of his day. Far above its crude convictions soared the clear faith of the new democratic ideal. The elements of this faith are eternal. The first is a profound love for humanity, a sympathy for all the woes of a suffering world. This love, this sympathy, burn on every page of the Prometheus Unbound. The next is the passion for freedom; such passion irradiates the drama. Last and greatest note of the democratic ideal is the spirit of a deathless hope; and the serene assurance that evil shall be conquered by the might of love is the soul of Shelley's poem. Through its every line breathes a hope that can neither falter nor repent, supreme in torture, triumphant over despair. The verse is suffused with the light of it, and gleams with the radiance of dawn. The Prometheus Unbound is a poem of the sunrise: —

> "The point of one white star is quivering still
> Far in the orange light of widening dawn
> Beyond the purple mountains."

Attainment in the drama there is none; of rest it has no message. It is a cloud-capped morning vision, with something of the elusiveness, the swift transitions, the shining mystery of the cloud. As such, we must receive it. The age was one of promise, not of achievement, and we wrong

its greatest poem when we search it for something which the age could not bestow. The Prometheus Unbound is the Drama of Hope. The time has not come yet — it may come in some far-distant day — when a new Shelley shall write for a rejoicing world the Drama of Fulfilment.

III.

THE DRAMA AS A WORK OF ART.

It is a thankless task to "unweave a rainbow." The iridescent beauty of Shelley's poems stimulates the spirit of joy rather than that of analysis. The historic position and inner significance of a poem may be made clearer by comment, but its charm as a work of art vanishes on close inspection, as the lights in a dew-drop die away under the microscope. The exquisite lines of Blake are peculiarly true of the appreciation of poetry: —

"He who bends to himself a joy
Shall the wingèd life destroy,
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sunrise."

Thus the suggestions which it seems wise to make concerning the artistic power of the Prometheus Unbound will seek, not to guide analysis, but to quicken receptivity. A poet's achievement is always largely determined by his temperament. This, true of all poets, is especially true of Shelley. As we have seen, he is a pure idealist. The chief notes of his temperament are two: an intense sensitiveness and a passion for change. The nature of Shelley, like that of Browning's St. John,

"Shudderingly, scarce a shred between,
Lies bare to the universal prick of light."

Not only "music and moonlight and feeling," but color, odor, form — yes, pain and pleasure — were one to Shelley. He describes his own dominant mood in the words of the little Spirit of the Earth: —

> "It was, as it still is, *the pain of bliss*,
> To move, to breathe, to be."

This poignant sensitiveness leads him to a marvellous fineness of perception; but his passion for change determines the sphere within which his perception shall act. Keats is as responsive as Shelley to subtle sense-impressions; Wordsworth's eye and ear had a fairy fineness. But Wordsworth and Keats alike, though from different reasons — Wordsworth from spiritual instinct, Keats from æsthetic instinct — reflected most readily moods of repose. The themes which both love to render are themes of peace. Shelley's spirit is of a different order. He is possessed by the vision of such elusive loveliness as vanishes for most of us even before it is beheld He is the poet of motion, of half-tints and passing moods, his glancing restlessness renders him interpreter of all that is fugitive in nature and the mind of man

All Shelley's poetry is subtly pervaded by his personality: but nowhere else do we find so perfect an expression of his nature as in the Prometheus Unbound. His idealism, his sensitiveness, his tremulous restlessness, are in every line. To the heaven of Shelley's mind the drama is like

> "The sea, in storm or calm,
> Heaven's ever-changing shadow, spread below"

It has a dream-like beauty, due in part to the pervading sense of spiritual realities thinly concealed, in part to the

wonderful delicacy with which it suggests rather than re ders the most fugitive aspects of nature and of feeling.

But the Prometheus Unbound is more than a refle tion of Shelley's temperament; it reveals his highest pow a power which otherwise we might never have known hi to possess. The drama is no mere succession of exquis details; it has a noble and organic unity. Matthew Arno tells us that a "high architectonic faculty" must alwa accompany complete poetic development. Ruskin ca this faculty the Imagination Associative; call it what will, it is the power which unites many imperfect parts in a perfect whole. It presides, Arnold says, at the evoluti of works like the Agamemnon or the Antigone. Co paratively simple in manifestation through the tragic dra of the Greeks, it finds fullest expression in the complex y organic construction of the Shakespearean drama. In t majority of Shelley's poems, devoid as they are of all d matic elements, there is perhaps no place for this pow His minor lyrics are but a single strain, though sometim as in the Ode to the West Wind, the varied developme of the emotional theme through a noble sequence of stan gives to the poem an inward harmony which suggests hi constructive instinct. The Adonais, again, is finely orga ized, though the articulation of parts is here somewh artificial, owing to the closeness with which the poem follo classic models. But in the Prometheus Unbound, Shell finally and completely vindicates his claim to the archite tonic faculty. His is not the Shakespearean power of d matic construction, dependent on the clash of charact with event; neither is it exactly the intellectual power sho in a noble development of thought-experience, like Tenn

son's in the In Memoriam. Shelley's power is more akin to that of the musician, from a simple melodic theme he evolves a vast whole of ordered harmony. The Prometheus Unbound is like a symphony or oratorio, where the music, exquisite at every point, is modulated with wondrous beauty and subtlety into a grandly progressive whole. To translate the drama into terms of music is, indeed, a *fascinating and feasible experiment. The unity of the poem*, then, since akin to the unity of music, is primarily emotional; and surely no emotional theme was ever discovered deeper and wider in scope, fuller of varied imaginative suggestion, than that of this Drama of Redemption

Each act of the Prometheus centres in a distinct phase of the one theme. The first act, expressing the calm of proud endurance, breaks towards the middle into an agony still passive and at the end sinks into the peace of exhaustion. The second act is one of hope and promise · if the first centres in endurance, this centres in action. The spirit of life palpitates through every line. Faint at first, as Asia waits in lovely passiveness, it grows more eager, stronger, till it culminates in the marvellous lyric which brings us close to Goethe's Werdelust — the creative rapture of the soul of the world. The third act is the calm of fulfilment, as the first was the calm of endurance. In the fourth act, a lyrical afterthought, the full pæan of triumph sweeps us along with tumultuous and unequalled harmony.

Now these moods — enduring expectation, life slowly quickened to full activity, fulfilment, and triumph — find expression, not alone through the thought of the poem, but through its form They interpenetrate its very structure, and mould every line of its verse. The treatment of nature,

the use made of light and color, the melody, are all determined by them; in studying the drama we must remember that it is great not only in parts but as a whole, and that each detail, however lovely in itself, gains wonderfully from its relation to the emotional tone of the context.

The treatment of nature reveals Shelley as clearly as anything in the Prometheus Unbound. In one sense, the poem is a nature-drama. The soul of nature is herself one of the personages and the scenery is grand and ideal. In Act I. we have the wildest of mountain scenery, bleak and bare save for the changing beauty of the sky; in Act II. we find ourselves surrounded by the luxuriance of tropical valleys. Sky-cleaving peaks, glaciers, lakes, rivers, vast forests, meet us on every page. For the most part, the action seems to take place on the heights, where the air is pure from taint and earth most nearly attains to heaven. The sky-scenery above all, with its gloom of gathering storms, its radiant sunrise, its "flocks of clouds in Spring's delightful weather," is as great as can be found in English poetry. Here Shelley's passion for change, for fleeting loveliness, can find free scope indeed. Yet perhaps we remember less the bold outline-work, the suggestion of nature's vaster aspects, than the rendering of marvellously delicate detail lost on a grosser eye or ear: —

"Wingèd clouds soar here and there
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of."

"As the bare green hill
Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
To the unpavilioned sky."

"As buds grow red when the snowstorms flee."

> "And like the vapours when the sun sinks down
> Gathering again in drops upon the pines,
> And tremulous as they, in the deep night
> My being was condensed."

Shelley's imagination always plays upon exquisitely accurate perception, yet his treatment of nature springs, not from the dull observation of the scientist, but from the vision-seeing faculty of the seer. It is a study full of interest to see how often some definite scientific conception is seized by him, and vitalized and vivified by the dynamic spiritualizing touch of the imagination. The little biography of a dew-drop, Act IV. l 439, is a charming instance, another is found in a passage, Act IV. l 476, where the force of gravitation is superbly interpreted into emotional terms.

It is only in the nineteenth century that the poets have become great colorists, and Shelley is one of the greatest that the century has seen. Only Keats, perhaps, can rival him; and if Keats has more force of color, Shelley has more purity. Keats's coloring is opaque, though brilliant, like that of a butterfly's wing, Shelley's is translucent, like an opal. Mr. Ruskin tells us that Nature always paints her loveliest hues on aqueous or crystalline matter; and the very law of Nature seems to be the instinct of Shelley. Rainbow-lights, keen, swift, and pure, play through the Prometheus The color flashes and is gone, elusive as that in a dew-drop

But the color in Prometheus Unbound has a higher function than to vivify the detail of the poem or to give us a series of exquisite vignettes By the use of light and color the great drama is shaped into an organic whole, and the architectonic power of Shelley is nobly shown The harmonious progression or evolution of the drama towards a

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definite goal is symbolically presented through the progress of the new cosmic day. The first act opens with night. In darkness, lit by the moonbeams of Memory and Hope, the Titan, glacier-bound, hangs

> "Upon this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
> Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured."

Slowly the "wingless, crawling hours" pass on. With the approach of Mercury comes the first promise of the dawn, that faint flush of color in the East which may be seen hours before sunrise, gathering dim purple and solemn crimson out of the very substance of the darkness and the void. The delusive promise is not fulfilled. From the East again sweeps up the thunder-cloud of the Furies: —

> "Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
> And hollow underneath, like Death."

The storm covers the heavens with darkness which, deeper than that of midnight, yet shadows forth but faintly the darkness of the spirit of Prometheus. Flashes of lightning reveal the lurid visions of the world's moments of keenest pain. At last the tempest spends its force, the clouds melt away, and the "blue air" holds fresh promise of the peace of dawn. The wings of the spirits of consolation fill the air with pure cloud-tints: —

> "See how they float
> On their sustaining wings of skyey grain,
> Orange and azure deepening into gold:
> Their soft smiles fill the air like a star's fire."

The exquisite twilight of dawn enfolds us; and, with the paling of the morning star, the act concludes. For the

deepening of the sunrise into its full glory, we must turn to the expectant heart of Love. The beginning of the second act gives us the fullest blaze of color in the whole poem, though the triumph of purest light is to follow later This sunrise-picture seems written in the hues of the sky itself. Its greatest marvel lies in its swift transitions, the tremulous passage of glory changed to glory even as we behold. Only the soul of a Turner could apprehend such a vision, and the brush of a Turner could but give us one arrested instant; while Shelley reveals the whole unfolding wondrous passage of the morning from promise to radiant fulfilment.

From this point, the fresh light of morning shines more and more clearly through the poem. Once again we feel it with peculiar power, where Asia and Panthea, breathing the pure air of the heights, watch below their feet the curling, brilliant, sunlit mists which veil the abode of Demogorgon

Again for a short space, we descend to the region of shadows, and, standing before the throne of Demogorgon, perceive

"A mighty darkness
Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom
Dart round, as light from the meridian sun"

Then, with abrupt and breathless transition, we are lifted to the final Height of Vision, and to the consummation of the drama. The apotheosis of Asia gives us the fulness of white light, the high noon of the great cosmic day. Shelley's mysticism here introduces one or two confusing lines, but his thought evidently is that the physical day has yielded to the new spiritual order, and that the rising of the material sun is superseded, at least in this great moment, by

the rising of the sun of Love. The development of the theme of the Day is now dropped, and the light is seemingly constant, the implication perhaps being that, in the evolution of human destiny, we have reached at last the era of unshadowed bliss, which stoops not to evening.

The supreme æsthetic glory of the Prometheus Unbound is not its nature-descriptions nor its color-treatment, but its music. Never did melody so enfold the spirit of a poet. The form is transparent and supple as clear flame. Blank verse rises into the long, passionate swing of the anapæst, or is broken by the flute-like notes of short trochaic lines, or relieved by the half-lyrical effect of rhymed endings. The verse lends itself with equal beauty to the grandeur of sustained endurance, to the passionate yearning of love, to severe philosophic inquiry, to the ethereal notes of spirit-voices dying on the wind. The variety of metres is marvellous. Thirty-six distinct verse-forms are to be found, besides the blank verse. These forms are usually simple; but at times the versification-scheme is as complex as that of the most elaborate odes of Dryden or Collins. Yet the artificial and labored beauty of the eighteenth century verse is replaced in Shelley by song spontaneous as that of his own skylark. The conventions, the external barriers of poetry, are completely swept away by the new democracy. We may apply to Shelley, and indeed to the typical poet of the modern world, the noble line:—

"His nature is its own divine control."

The blank verse itself is no monotonous instrument, and the range of the poet's power can in no way be better illustrated than by the different kinds of music which he is able to draw

from an instrument technically unchanged. This may be seen at once by comparing the opening soliloquy of Prometheus, in Act. I., with that of the opening soliloquy of Asia in Act II The music of these two passages is entirely different. In the speech of Prometheus, consonant strikes hard on consonant, and the vowel-coloring is scant and cold. The lines have a sonorous pomp, derived in part from their austere majesty of epithet, in part from their sternly repressed passion. But into the words of Asia has passed something of the soft air and light of the spring-tide which she sings. The melody has a prolonged and gentle sweetness, which might be languid, were it not for the sparkle of delicate life that animates the whole. The same distinction of quality may always be felt in the best utterances of Prometheus and of Asia Jupiter, again, speaks with a proud accent all his own. His monologue has a certain metallic ring, a harshness of utterance, quite different from the pure, quiet, sad, and strong accent of Prometheus. To Demogorgon's speeches Shelley has not, I think, succeeded in imparting a distinct cadence He says little, and his few speeches are commonplace as poetry, though at times suggestive as thought. Any poet of the third order could have written :—

> "Lift thy lightnings not.
> The tyranny of heaven none may retain
> Or reassume or hold, succeeding thee"

Probably even Shelley found it difficult to impart individual accent to the words of a "Mighty Darkness."

Of all these different types of blank verse, there is one most intimately characteristic of Shelley We find it always in the speeches of Asia, sometimes elsewhere. Miltonic

echoes sound through the words
Jupiter, but there is a cadence of
master, unique in haunting, clinging

"Shepherded by the slow, unw

"With feet unwet, unwearied,

"It is the unpastured sea hung

"See where the child of heave
Runs down the slanted sunlig

In lines like these, Shelley has dra English words.

Even the blank verse of Shelley hol but it is the sweep and variety of dir which first arrests attention in the I There is no rigid distinction in the major characters of the drama use recitative, while Ione, Panthea, and t acters generally sing rather than sp characters, or rather chorus-voices, en imaginative power of the drama. Co source, they make themselves heard critical moments. The whole creation seems thus to share in the great spiritua and the unearthly beauty of these sn us with the sense that we are listenin tures, too fine for discernment by any g of sound. These spirit-voices are first h the Earth-mother, yet unenlightened, b retraction of the curse: —

"Misery, oh misery to me
That Jove at last should vanquish ye.
Wail, howl aloud, land and sea
The earth's rent heart shall answer ye
Mourn, spirits of the living and the dead,
Your refuge, your defence, lies fallen and vanquishèd."

FIRST ECHO

Lies fallen, and vanquishèd

SECOND ECHO

Fallen and vanquishèd.

Thus we have the impression of the Powers of Nature, ethereal yet unspiritual, unable to apprehend the higher attitude of regenerate man. But the most exquisite instance of this fairy-like use of the lyrical interlude is in that first scene of the second act, already quoted, where all nature, becoming vocal with spirit-voices, sings and whispers its quickening message. These tiny lyrics can be compared to nothing but the Ariel songs in the Tempest They have the same light trochaic movement, sacred, in Shakespeare and Shelley, to fairy suggestion, they have the same dainty and elusive grace. Perhaps the singing of the wind in the pine branches and the lovely, inarticulate rise and fall of the sounds of nature in a spring morning ring through the songs of Shelley's echoes even more perfectly than through those of Shakespeare's tricksy sprite. In the last act of the Prometheus the spirit-voices have it all their own way. Their music, from an undertone, has become dominant, and they blend with a grander harmony in expressing the rapture of a creation redeemed to the freedom of new and perfect life.

Shelley's handling of his instrument will become cleare if we follow very briefly the consecutive metrical changes i the drama. As a rule, the blank verse marks passages c transition or of repressed feeling, while at every climax c passion the poetry rushes into lyrical form. The first intrc duction of the lyric follows the opening soliloquy of Prc metheus. He calls on mountains, springs, the air, th whirlwinds, to repeat to him the forgotten curse. The respond, and deny, in long lyrical lines; and, though th horror deepens through the images of carnage presented b their words, relief is yet afforded, after the stern repressio of Prometheus, by the free beauty of the movement of th verse. The lyric next appears where Ione and Panthea whose voices are now heard for the first time, hail th approach of the Phantasm of Jupiter. This is the first passage in the drama of pure and painless beauty. The curse is lyrical, but even, slow, serene in movement. The coming of Mercury is sung by the sister-spirits in exquisite lines. After the long passage, in which the Titan, clad in the conscious pride of purity, repels the temptation of the fair Spirit of Compromise, the lyric appears again with the coming of the Furies. We approach now the climax of the horror of the drama. That horror is rendered endurable, and competent to purge us by pity and terror, largely through the marvellous beauty of the music through which it breathes. As the pain of the whole world presses upon the spirit of Prometheus, the music deepens in grandeur and solemnity; the grievous terror of the visions beheld by the Titan is subdued by the weird melody that ebbs and flows with the theme. Yet not in lyric but in blank verse is reached the climax of the revelation of sor-

row, and in blank verse does Prometheus utter his cry of supreme anguish. Shelley doubtless here suggests the quietness of the deepest horror of life. Not the height of lyrical passion but dull recognition of daily experience marks the supreme bitterness of the woful problem of human destiny. As the pain subsides and the weary but triumphant Titan sinks into repose, the tension of the song relaxes. The coming of the spirits of the human mind is heralded in lines which afford exquisite relief by the mere introduction of rhyme; and the lyrics of consolation chanted by these spirits have a serene and tender beauty of movement all their own

Of certain portions of the music of the second act we have already spoken. "Shelley has here," says Todhunter, "made English blank verse the native language of elemental genii" The lyrics are more frequent, and blend more with structure than in the first act The whole journey of Asia and Panthea is like a great processional, accompanied by a chant which now rises, now falls upon the wind. The semichoruses that sing the advance of the sister-spirits have a subtle mystical meaning, they have also an imaginative beauty of movement like that of Keats's Ode to a Nightingale, but with less heavy richness, and a more flute-like tone.

The longest passage of blank verse in the act is the discussion between Demogorgon and Asia, which is purely intellectual. As soon as emotion and action reappear, the verse breaks into the Song of the Spirit of the Hour. This anapæstic lyric, interrupted as it is by the end of the scene, and ended in Scene V, gives a wonderful impression of haste. The fifth scene, the apotheosis of Asia, touches the high-water mark of the English lyric The scene corresponds in

passion to the scene with the Furies, in Act I. As that wa hate this is love, as that was darkness this is light, as that wa supreme horror so this is supreme rapture. The great Lyric Life of Life, is simple in form, as a ray of white sunligh is simple. Asia's response, less well known, is a sequenc of subtly inwoven harmonies.

The third act, as we have already said, is attuned to th music of peace. But Shelley is less fitted to render thi music than to sing of desire, or even of endurance. Th second act is artistically as well as spiritually the finest i the drama. Yet the third act has certain passages of tran quil music, music no longer, as in the first act, breathing th tense calm of pain and scorn, but inspired with the fre serenity of joy. Such is the lovely little scene between Apoll and Ocean, which is Hellenic in its pure repose.

The fourth act defies comment. The triumphant pæa of enfranchised Nature, it is so bewildering in comple structure, so intricate in beauty, so remote from all huma interest, that complete sympathy with it is, perhaps, im possible. Yet the act as a whole marks the most sustaine effort of English lyrical genius. The music with which i opens is light, almost too light, perhaps, as the Hours, pas and future, and the spirits of the human mind, join in joyfu choruses of thankful glee. But soon the music deepens an widens, and proceeds with an involution of solemn harmony in the grand antiphon of rejoicing between the Spirit of th Earth and of the Moon. The music of the earth is grav and exultant, that of the moon exquisite in lightness an tenderness. The act, and the drama, conclude with a organ-roll of harmony, like that of the Ode to the Wes Wind. Demogorgon, the mystic Living Spirit, the Powe

no longer of Destruction but of Love, solemnly invokes all forces of natural and spiritual life to listen to his song; and when, in answering music, they attest their presence, and we feel the harmony of the redeemed creation speaking through their words, he utters, in cadence grave and serene, his final message. It is the message of courage and of hope; and the quiet dignity and seriousness of the lines fitly conclude that music which may at times have seemed wild, lawless, and fantastic, yet which has always in its most passionate abandon yielded allegiance to the law of perfect beauty.

Thus we see that the poetic power of Shelley, as manifested in the Prometheus Unbound, is distinct and very high. The hold on concrete human life of a Shakespeare or a Browning he does not possess; nor was there granted to him the serene insight of Wordsworth nor the philosophic method of Tennyson. But his exquisitely equipped temperament, sensitive in every fibre, enabled him to express those finest aspects of nature where visible trembles into invisible, and those finest aspects of emotion where rapture and sorrow blend. He has the power to sing melodies which seem the echoes of unearthly music, while his imaginative passion and spiritual insight reveal to him the solemn vision of human destiny, and the redemption that shall be. The Ode to the West Wind, written in the same year as the Prometheus Unbound, doubtless expresses Shelley's own longing for his drama, and as we realize the power with which his message has been uttered, we must feel that the longing has been fulfilled —

"Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is
What though my leaves are falling like its own?
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

"Shall take from both a deep Autumnal tone,
Sweet, though in sadness; be thou, Spirit fierce,
My Spirit; be thou me, impetuous one.

"Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth,
And by the incantation of this verse

"Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth,
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind:
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

'The trumpet of a prophecy. O wind,
If Winter come, can Spring be far behind?"

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

A LYRICAL DRAMA

IN FOUR ACTS

BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

"Audisne hæc Amphiarae, sub terram abdite?"

PREFACE.

[BY SHELLEY.]

THE Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their national history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary discretion. They by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the common interpretation or to imitate in story as in title their rivals and predecessors Such a system would have amounted to a resignation of those claims to preference over their competitors which incited the composition The Agamemnonian story was exhibited on the Athenian theatre with as many variations as dramas

I have presumed to employ a similar licence. The Prometheus Unbound of Æschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Æschylus; an ambition, which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might well abate But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan, and Prometheus is, in my judgement, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage,

and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the Hero of Paradise Lost, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults and his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

This Poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.

The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed. This is unusual in modern poetry, although Dante and Shakspeare are full of instances of the same kind: Dante indeed more than any other poet, and with greater success. But the Greek poets, as writers to whom no resource of awakening the sympathy of their contemporaries was unknown, were in the habitual use of this power; and it is the study of their works, (since a higher merit would probably be denied me,) to which I am willing that my readers should impute this singularity.

One word is due in candour to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my composition; for such has been a topic of censure with regard to poems far more popular, and indeed more deservedly popular, than mine. It is impossible that any one who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own, can conscientiously assure himself that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the productions of those extraordinary intellects. It is true, that, not the spirit of their genius, but the forms in which it has mani-

fested itself, are due less to the peculiarities of their own minds than to the peculiarity of the moral and the intellectual condition of the minds among which they have been produced. Thus a number of writers possess the form, whilst they want the spirit of those whom, it is alleged, they imitate; because the former is the endowment of the age in which they live, and the latter must be the uncommunicated lightning of their own mind

The peculiar style of intense and comprehensive imagery which distinguishes the modern literature of England, has not been, as a general power, the product of the imitation of any particular writer The mass of capabilities remains at every period materially the same, the circumstances which awaken it to action perpetually change. If England were divided into forty republics, each equal in population and extent to Athens, there is no reason to suppose but that, under institutions not more perfect than those of Athens, each would produce philosophers and poets equal to those who (if we except Shakspeare) have never been surpassed We owe the great writers of the golden age of our literature to that fervid awakening of the public mind which shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive form of the Christian religion. We owe Milton to the progress and developement of the same spirit the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican, and a bold inquirer into morals and religion The great writers of our own age are, we have reason to suppose, the companions and forerunners of some unimagined change in our social condition or the opinions which cement it The cloud of mind is discharging its collected lightning, and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring, or is about to be restored

As to imitation, poetry is a mimetic art It creates, but it creates by combination and representation Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man or in nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought, and with the contemporary condition of them one great poet is a masterpiece of nature which another not only ought to study but must study He might as wisely and as easily determine that his mind should no longer be the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe, as exclude

from his contemplation the beautiful which exists in the writings of a great contemporary. The pretence of doing it would be a presumption in any but the greatest; the effect, even in him, would be strained, unnatural, and ineffectual. A poet is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others; and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers; he is not one, but both. Every man's mind is, in this respect, modified by all the objects of Nature and art; by every word and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected, and in which they compose one form. Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors, and musicians, are, in one sense, the creators, and, in another, the creations, of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape. There is a similarity between Homer and Hesiod, between Æschylus and Euripides, between Virgil and Horace, between Dante and Petrarch, between Shakspeare and Fletcher, between Dryden and Pope; each has a generic resemblance under which their specific distinctions are arranged. If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated.

Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have, what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms, "a passion for reforming the world:" what passion incited him to write and publish his book, he omits to explain. For my part I would rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon, than go to Heaven with Paley and Malthus. But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse. My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society, let not the advocates of

injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Æschylus rather than Plato as my model.

The having spoken of myself with unaffected freedom will need little apology with the candid; and let the uncandid consider that they injure me less than their own hearts and minds by misrepresentation. Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them: if his attempt be ineffectual, let the punishment of an unaccomplished purpose have been sufficient; let none trouble themselves to heap the dust of oblivion upon his efforts, the pile they raise will betray his grave which might otherwise have been unknown.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PROMETHEUS.	ASIA, PANTHEA, IONE, } *Oceanides.*
DEMOGORGON.	THE PHANTASM OF JUPITER.
JUPITER.	THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.
THE EARTH.	THE SPIRIT OF THE MOON.
OCEAN.	SPIRITS OF THE HOURS.
APOLLO.	SPIRITS. ECHOES. FAUNS.
MERCURY.	FURIES.
HERCULES.	

ACT I.

SCENE, *A Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS *is discovered bound to the Precipice.* PANTHEA *and* IONE *are seated at his Feet. Time, Night. During the Scene, Morning slowly breaks.*

PROMETHEUS.

Monarch of Gods and Daemons, and all Spirits
But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes ! regard this Earth

Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requitest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair, — these are mine empire.
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O, Mighty God!
Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?
I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing shadow spread below,
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals, the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
Heaven's wingèd hound, polluting from thy lips

His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind:
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail
And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar frost of the morn,
Or, starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-colored east, for then they lead
The wingless, crawling hours, one among whom
— As some dark Priest hales the reluctant victim —
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee What ruin
Will hunt thee undefended thro' the wide Heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall. Ye Mountains,
Whose many-voicèd Echoes, thro' the mist
Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell!
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering thro' India! Thou serenest Air,
Thro' which the Sun walks burning without beams!

And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on poisèd wings
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,
As thunder, louder than your own, made rock
The orbèd world! If then my words had power,
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
Is dead within; although no memory be
Of what is hate, let them not lose it now!
What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak.

FIRST VOICE: *from the Mountains.*

Thrice three hundred thousand years
  O'er the Earthquake's couch we stood:
Oft, as men convulsed with fears,
  We trembled in our multitude.

SECOND VOICE: *from the Springs.*

Thunder-bolts had parched our water,
  We had been stained with bitter blood,
And had run mute, 'mid shrieks of slaughter,
  Thro' a city and a solitude.

THIRD VOICE: *from the Air.*

I had clothed, since Earth uprose,
  Its wastes in colours not their own,
And oft had my serene repose
  Been cloven by many a rending groan.

FOURTH VOICE: *from the Whirlwinds.*

We had soared beneath these mountains
  Unresting ages; nor had thunder,

Nor yon volcano's flaming fountains,
Nor any power above or under
Ever made us mute with wonder.

FIRST VOICE.

But never bowed our snowy crest
As at the voice of thine unrest.

SECOND VOICE.

Never such a sound before
To the Indian waves we bore.
A pilot asleep on the howling sea
Leaped up from the deck in agony,
And heard, and cried, "Ah, woe is me!"
And died as mad as the wild waves be.

THIRD VOICE.

By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
My still realm was never riven
When its wound was closed, there stood
Darkness o'er the day like blood.

FOURTH VOICE

And we shrank back for dreams of ruin
To frozen caves our flight pursuing
Made us keep silence — thus — and thus —
Though silence is a hell to us.

THE EARTH.

The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills
Cried, 'Misery!' then, the hollow Heaven replied

'Misery!' And the Ocean's purple waves,
Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds,
And the pale nations heard it, 'Misery!'

PROMETHEUS.

I heard a sound of voices: not the voice
Which I gave forth. Mother, thy sons and thou
Scorn him, without whose all-enduring will
Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove,
Both they and thou had vanished, like thin mist
Unrolled on the morning wind. Know ye not me,
The Titan? He who made his agony
The barrier to your else all-conquering foe?
Oh rock-embosomed lawns, and snow-fed streams,
Now seen athwart frore vapours, deep below,
Thro' whose o'ershadowing woods I wandered once
With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes;
Why scorns the spirit which informs ye, now
To commune with me? me alone, who checked,
As one who checks a fiend-drawn charioteer,
The falsehood and the force of him who reigns
Supreme, and with the groans of pining slaves
Fills your dim glens and liquid wildernesses:
Why answer ye not, still? Brethren!

THE EARTH.

They dare not.

PROMETHEUS.

Who dares? for I would hear that curse again.
Ha, what an awful whisper rises up!

'Tis scarce like sound: it tingles thro' the frame
As lightning tingles, hovering ere it strike.
Speak, Spirit! From thine inorganic voice
I only know that thou art moving near
And love. How cursed I him?

THE EARTH.

How canst thou hear
Who knowest not the language of the dead?

PROMETHEUS.

Thou art a living spirit: speak as they.

THE EARTH.

I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell King
Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain
More torturing than the one whereon I roll.
Subtle thou art and good, and tho' the Gods
Hear not this voice, yet thou art more than God,
Being wise and kind: earnestly hearken now.

PROMETHEUS.

Obscurely thro' my brain, like shadows dim,
Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick. I feel
Faint, like one mingled in entwining love,
Yet 'tis not pleasure.

THE EARTH.

No, thou canst not hear:
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
Only to those who die

PROMETHEUS.

And what art thou,
O, melancholy Voice?

THE EARTH.

I am the Earth,
Thy mother; she within whose stony veins,
To the last fibre of the loftiest tree
Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air,
Joy ran, as blood within a living frame,
When thou didst from her bosom, like a cloud
Of glory, arise, a spirit of keen joy!
And at thy voice her pining sons uplifted
Their prostrate brows from the polluting dust,
And our almighty Tyrant with fierce dread
Grew pale, until his thunder chained thee here.
Then, see those million worlds which burn and roll
Around us: their inhabitants beheld
My spherèd light wane in wide Heaven; the sea
Was lifted by strange tempest, and new fire
From earthquake-rifted mountains of bright snow
Shook its portentous hair beneath Heaven's frown;
Lightning and Inundation vexed the plains;
Blue thistles bloomed in cities; foodless toads
Within voluptuous chambers panting crawled:
Where Plague had fallen on man, and beast, and worm,
And Famine; and black blight on herb and tree;
And in the corn, and vines, and meadow-grass,
Teemed ineradicable poisonous weeds
Draining their growth, for my wan breast was dry
With grief; and the thin air, my breath, was stained

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With the contagion of a mother's hate
Breathed on her child's destroyer; aye, I heard
Thy curse, the which, if thou rememberest not,
Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
Mountains, and caves, and winds, and yon wide air,
And the inarticulate people of the dead,
Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate
In secret joy and hope those dreadful words,
But dare not speak them.

PROMETHEUS.

Venerable mother!
All else who live and suffer take from thee
Some comfort, flowers, and fruits, and happy sounds,
And love, though fleeting; these may not be mine.
But mine own words, I pray, deny me not.

THE EARTH.

They shall be told. Ere Babylon was dust,
The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child,
Met his own image walking in the garden.
That apparition, sole of men, he saw
For know, there are two worlds of life and death:
One that which thou beholdest; but the other
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
The shadows of all forms that think and live
Till death unite them and they part no more,
Dreams and the light imaginings of men,
And all that faith creates or love desires,
Terrible, strange, sublime, and beauteous shapes.
There thou art, and dost hang, a writhing shade,

Mid whirlwind-peopled mountains; all
Are there, and all the powers of namel
Vast, sceptred phantoms; heroes, men,
And Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom
And he, the supreme Tyrant, on his th
Of burning gold. Son, one of these sh
The curse which all remember. Call a
Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupit
Hades or Typhon, or what mightier Go
From all-prolific Evil, since thy ruin
Have sprung, and trampled on my pros
Ask, and they must reply: so the reven
Of the Supreme may sweep through va
As rainy wind through the abandoned g
Of a fallen palace.

PROMETHEUS.

Mother, let not au
Of that which may be evil, pass again
My lips, or those of aught resembling n
Phantasm of Jupiter, arise, appear!

IONE.

My wings are folded o'er min
My wings are crossèd o'er n
Yet thro' their silver shade ap
And thro' their lulling plum
A Shape, a throng of sounds;
May it be no ill to thee
O thou of many wounds!
Near whom, for our sweet sister'
Ever thus we watch and wake.

PANTHEA.

The sound is of whirlwind underground,
Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven;
The shape is awful like the sound,
Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.
A sceptre of pale gold
To stay steps proud, o'er the slow cloud
His veinèd hand doth hold.
Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,
Like one who does, not suffers wrong.

PHANTASM OF JUPITER.

Why have the secret powers of this strange world
Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither
On direst storms? What unaccustomed sounds
Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice
With which our pallid race hold ghastly talk
In darkness? And, proud sufferer, who art thou?

PROMETHEUS.

Tremendous Image, as thou art must be
He whom thou shadowest forth. I am his foe,
The Titan. Speak the words which I would hear,
Although no thought inform thine empty voice.

THE EARTH.

Listen! And tho' your echoes must be mute,
Grey mountains, and old woods, and haunted springs,
Prophetic caves, and isle-surrounding streams,
Rejoice to hear what yet ye cannot speak.

PHANTASM.

A spirit seizes me and speaks within:
It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud.

PANTHEA.

See, how he lifts his mighty looks, the Heaven
Darkens above.

IONE.

He speaks! O shelter me!

PROMETHEUS.

I see the curse on gestures proud and cold,
And looks of firm defiance, and calm hate,
And such despair as mocks itself with smiles,
Written as on a scroll: yet speak: Oh, speak!

PHANTASM.

Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm, fixed mind,
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do;
Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind,
One only being shalt thou not subdue.
Rain then thy plagues upon me here,
Ghastly disease, and frenzying fear;
And let alternate frost and fire
Eat into me, and be thine ire
Lightning, and cutting hail, and legioned forms
Of furies, driving by upon the wounding storms.

Aye, do thy worst. Thou art omnipotent.
O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,

And my own will. Be thy swift mischiefs sent
To blast mankind, from yon æthenal tower.
Let thy malignant spirit move
In darkness over those I love:
On me and mine I imprecate
The utmost torture of thy hate;
And thus devote to sleepless agony,
This undeclining head while thou must reign on high

But thou, who art the God and Lord: O, thou,
Who fillest with thy soul this world of woe,
To whom all things of Earth and Heaven do bow
In fear and worship: all-prevailing foe!
I curse thee! let a sufferer's curse
Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse;
Till thine Infinity shall be
A robe of envenomed agony;
And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain,
To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain.

Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this Curse,
Ill deeds, then be thou damned, beholding good,
Both infinite as is the universe,
And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude.
An awful image of calm power
Though now thou sittest, let the hour
Come, when thou must appear to be
That which thou art internally.
And after many a false and fruitless crime
Scorn track thy lagging fall thro' boundless space and time.

PROMETHEUS.

Were these my words, O, Parent?

THE EARTH.

They were thine.

PROMETHEUS.

It doth repent me: words are quick and vain;
Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.

THE EARTH.

Misery, Oh misery to me,
That Jove at length should vanquish thee.
Wail, howl aloud, Land and Sea,
The Earth's rent heart shall answer ye.
Howl, Spirits of the living and the dead,
Your refuge, your defence lies fallen and vanquishèd.

FIRST ECHO.

Lies fallen and vanquishèd!

SECOND ECHO.

Fallen and vanquishèd!

IONE.

Fear not: 'tis but some passing spasm,
The Titan is unvanquished still.
But see, where thro' the azure chasm
Of yon forked and snowy hill
Trampling the slant winds on high
With golden-sandalled feet, that glow

Under plumes of purple dye,
Like rose-ensanguined ivory,
A Shape comes now,
Stretching on high from his right hand
A serpent-cinctured wand.

PANTHEA.

'Tis Jove's world-wandering herald, Mercury.

IONE.

And who are those with hydra tresses
And iron wings that climb the wind,
Whom the frowning God represses
Like vapours steaming up behind,
Clanging loud, an endless crowd —

PANTHEA.

These are Jove's tempest-walking hounds,
Whom he gluts with groans and blood,
When charioted on sulphurous cloud
He bursts Heaven's bounds.

IONE.

Are they now led, from the thin dead
On new pangs to be fed?

PANTHEA.

The Titan looks as ever, firm, not proud.

FIRST FURY.

Ha! I scent life!

SECOND FURY.

Let me but look into his eyes!

THIRD FURY.

The hope of torturing him smells like a heap
Of corpses, to a death-bird after battle.

FIRST FURY.

Darest thou delay, O Herald! Take cheer, Hounds
Of Hell: what if the Son of Maia soon
Should make us food and sport — who can please long
The Omnipotent?

MERCURY.

Back to your towers of iron,
And gnash, beside the streams of fire and wail,
Your foodless teeth. Geryon, arise! and Gorgon,
Chimæra, and thou Sphinx, subtlest of fiends
Who ministered to Thebes Heaven's poisoned wine,
Unnatural love, and more unnatural hate:
These shall perform your task.

FIRST FURY.

Oh, mercy! mercy!
We die with our desire: drive us not back!

MERCURY.

Crouch then in silence.

Awful Sufferer
To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
I come, by the great Father's will driven down,
To execute a doom of new revenge.

Alas! I pity thee, and hate myself
That I can do no more: aye from thy sight
Returning, for a season, Heaven seems Hell,
So thy worn form pursues me night and day,
Smiling reproach. Wise art thou, firm and good,
But vainly wouldst stand forth alone in strife
Against the Omnipotent; as yon clear lamps
That measure and divide the weary years
From which there is no refuge, long have taught
And long must teach. Even now thy Torturer arms
With the strange might of unimagined pains
The powers who scheme slow agonies in Hell,
And my commission is to lead them here,
Or what more subtle, foul, or savage fiends
People the abyss, and leave them to their task.
Be it not so! there is a secret known
To thee, and to none else of living things,
Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven
The fear of which perplexes the Supreme
Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne
In intercession, bend thy soul in prayer,
And like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane,
Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart:
For benefits and meek submission tame
The fiercest and the mightiest.

PROMETHEUS.

Evil minds
Change good to their own nature. I gave all
He has; and in return he chains me here
Years, ages, night and day whether the Sun

Split my parched skin, or in the moony night
The crystal-wingèd snow cling round my hair:
Whilst my beloved race is trampled down
By his thought-executing ministers.
Such is the tyrant's recompense: 'tis just:
He who is evil can receive no good;
And for a world bestowed, or a friend lost,
He can feel hate, fear, shame; not gratitude:
He but requites me for his own misdeed.
Kindness to such is keen reproach, which breaks
With bitter stings the light sleep of Revenge.
Submission, thou dost know I cannot try:
For what submission but that fatal word,
The death-seal of mankind's captivity,
Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword,
Which trembles o'er his crown, would he accept,
Or could I yield? Which yet I will not yield.
Let others flatter Crime, where it sits throned
In brief Omnipotence: secure are they:
For Justice, when triumphant, will weep down
Pity, not punishment, on her own wrongs,
Too much avenged by those who err. I wait,
Enduring thus, the retributive hour
Which since we spake is even nearer now.
But hark, the hell-hounds clamour: fear delay:
Behold! Heaven lowers under thy Father's frown.

MERCURY.

Oh, that we might be spared: I to inflict
And thou to suffer! Once more answer me:
Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power?

PROMETHEUS.

I know but this, that it must come.

MERCURY.

Alas!
Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain?

PROMETHEUS

They last while Jove must reign · nor more, nor less
Do I desire or fear.

MERCURY

Yet pause, and plunge
Into Eternity, where recorded time,
Even all that we imagine, age on age,
Seems but a point, and the reluctant mind
Flags wearily in its unending flight,
Till it sink, dizzy, blind, lost, shelterless,
Perchance it has not numbered the slow years
Which thou must spend in torture, unreprieved?

PROMETHEUS.

Perchance no thought can count them, yet they pass.

MERCURY.

If thou might'st dwell among the Gods the while
Lapped in voluptuous joy?

PROMETHEUS.

I would not quit
This bleak ravine, these unrepentant pains.

MERCURY.

Alas! I wonder at, yet pity thee.

PROMETHEUS.

Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene,
As light in the sun, throned: how vain is talk!
Call up the fiends.

IONE.

O, sister, look! White fire
Has cloven to the roots yon huge snow-loaded cedar;
How fearfully God's thunder howls behind!

MERCURY.

I must obey his words and thine: alas!
Most heavily remorse hangs at my heart!

PANTHEA.

See where the child of Heaven, with wingèd feet,
Runs down the slanted sunlight of the dawn.

IONE.

Dear sister, close thy plumes over thine eyes
Lest thou behold and die: they come: they come
Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
And hollow underneath, like death.

FIRST FURY.

Prometheus!

SECOND FURY.

Immortal Titan!

THIRD FURY.

Champion of Heaven's slaves!

PROMETHEUS.

He whom some dreadful voice invokes is here,
Prometheus, the chained Titan. Horrible forms,
What and who are ye? Never yet there came
Phantasms so foul thro' monster-teeming Hell
From the all-miscreative brain of Jove;
Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,
Methinks I grow like what I contemplate,
And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy.

FIRST FURY.

We are the ministers of pain, and fear,
And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
And clinging crime, and as lean dogs pursue
Thro' wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will.

PROMETHEUS.

Oh! many fearful natures in one name,
I know ye, and these lakes and echoes know
The darkness and the clangour of your wings
But why more hideous than your loathèd selves
Gather ye up in legions from the deep?

SECOND FURY.

We knew not that Sisters, rejoice, rejoice!

MERCURY.

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SECOND FURY.

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PROMETHEUS.

Can aught exult in its deformity?

SECOND FURY.

The beauty of delight makes lovers glad,
Gazing on one another: so are we.
As from the rose which the pale priestess kneels
To gather for her festal crown of flowers
The aërial crimson falls, flushing her cheek,
So from our victim's destined agony
The shade which is our form invests us round,
Else we are shapeless as our mother Night.

PROMETHEUS.

I laugh your power, and his who sent you here,
To lowest scorn. Pour forth the cup of pain.

FIRST FURY.

Thou thinkest we will rend thee bone from bone,
And nerve from nerve, working like fire within?

PROMETHEUS.

Pain is my element, as hate is thine;
Ye rend me now: I care not.

SECOND FURY.

Dost imagine
We will but laugh into thy lidless eyes?

PROMETHEUS.

I weigh not what ye do, but what ye suffer,

Being evil. Cruel was the power which called
You, or aught else so wretched, into light.

THIRD FURY.

Thou think'st we will live thro' thee, one by one,
Like animal life, and tho' we can obscure not
The soul which burns within, that we will dwell
Beside it, like a vain loud multitude
Vexing the self-content of wisest men:
That we will be dread thought beneath thy brain,
And foul desire round thy astonished heart,
And blood within thy labyrinthine veins
Crawling like agony.

PROMETHEUS.

Why, ye are thus now;
Yet am I king over myself, and rule
The torturing and conflicting throngs within,
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous

CHORUS OF FURIES.

From the ends of the earth, from the ends of the earth,
Where the night has its grave and the morning its birth,
Come, come, come!
Oh, ye who shake hills with the scream of your mirth,
When cities sink howling in ruin; and ye
Who with wingless footsteps trample the sea,
And close upon Shipwreck and Famine's track,
Sit chattering with joy on the foodless wreck,
Come, come, come!

Leave the bed, low, cold, and red,
Strewed beneath a nation dead;
Leave the hatred, as in ashes
  Fire is left for future burning:
It will burst in bloodier flashes
  When ye stir it, soon returning:
Leave the self-contempt implanted
In young spirits, sense-enchanted,
  Misery's yet unkindled fuel:
Leave Hell's secrets half unchanted
  To the maniac dreamer; cruel
More than ye can be with hate
      Is he with fear.
  Come, come, come!
We are steaming up from Hell's wide gate
  And we burthen the blasts of the atmosphere,
  But vainly we toil till ye come here.

IONE.

Sister, I hear the thunder of new wings.

PANTHEA.

These solid mountains quiver with the sound
Even as the tremulous air: their shadows make
The space within my plumes more black than night.

FIRST FURY.

  Your call was as a wingèd car
  Driven on whirlwinds fast and far;
  It rapt us from red gulphs of war.

SECOND FURY.

From wide cities, famine-wasted;

THIRD FURY.

Groans half heard, and blood untasted;

FOURTH FURY.

Kingly conclaves stern and cold,
Where blood with gold is bought and sold;

FIFTH FURY.

From the furnace, white and hot,
In which —

A FURY.

Speak not: whisper not:
I know all that ye would tell,
But to speak might break the spell
Which must bend the Invincible,
The stern of thought;
He yet defies the deepest power of Hell.

FURY.

Tear the veil!

ANOTHER FURY.

It is torn.

CHORUS.

The pale stars of the morn
Shine on a misery, dire to be borne.
Dost thou faint, mighty Titan? We laugh thee to scorn.
Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for man?

Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
Those perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,
Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever.
One came forth of gentle worth,
Smiling on the sanguine earth;
His words outlived him, like swift poison
Withering up truth, peace, and pity.
Look! where round the wide horizon
Many a million-peopled city
Vomits smoke in the bright air.
Mark that outcry of despair!
'Tis his mild and gentle ghost
Wailing for the faith he kindled:
Look again, the flames almost
To a glow-worm's lamp have dwindled:
The survivors round the embers
Gather in dread.
Joy, joy, joy!
Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers,
And the future is dark, and the present is spread
Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.

SEMICHORUS I.

Drops of bloody agony flow
From his white and quivering brow.
Grant a little respite now:
See a disenchanted nation
Springs like day from desolation;
To Truth its state is dedicate,
And Freedom leads it forth, her mate;

A legioned band of linkèd brothers
Whom Love calls children —

SEMICHORUS II.

'Tis another's:
See how kindred murder kin:
'Tis the vintage-time for death and sin:
Blood, like new wine, bubbles within:
Till Despair smothers
The struggling world, which slaves and tyrants win.
[*All the* FURIES *vanish except one.*

IONE.

Hark, sister! what a low yet dreadful groan,
Quite unsuppressed is tearing up the heart
Of the good Titan, as storms tear the deep,
And beasts hear the sea moan in inland caves.
Darest thou observe how the fiends torture him?

PANTHEA.

Alas! I looked forth twice, but will no more.

IONE.

What didst thou see?

PANTHEA.

A woful sight: a youth
With patient looks nailed to a crucifix.

IONE.

What next?

PANTHEA.

The heaven around, the earth below
Was peopled with thick shapes of human death,
All horrible, and wrought by human hands,
And some appeared the work of human hearts,
For men were slowly killed by frowns and smiles:
And other sights too foul to speak and live
Were wandering by. Let us not tempt worse fear
By looking forth: those groans are grief enough.

FURY.

Behold an emblem: those who do endure
Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap
Thousandfold torment on themselves and him.

PROMETHEUS.

Remit the anguish of that lighted stare;
Close those wan lips; let that thorn-wounded brow
Stream not with blood; it mingles with thy tears!
Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death,
So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix,
So those pale fingers play not with thy gore.
O, horrible! Thy name I will not speak,
It hath become a curse. I see, I see
The wise, the mild, the lofty, and the just,
Whom thy slaves hate for being like to thee,
Some hunted by foul lies from their heart's home,
An early-chosen, late-lamented home;
As hooded ounces cling to the driven hind;
Some linked to corpses in unwholesome cells:

Some — Hear I not the multitude laugh loud? —
Impaled in lingering fire: and mighty realms
Float by my feet, like sea-uprooted isles,
Whose sons are kneaded down in common blood
By the red light of their own burning homes.

FURY.

Blood thou canst see, and fire; and canst hear groans;
Worse things, unheard, unseen, remain behind.

PROMETHEUS.

Worse?

FURY.

In each human heart terror survives
The ruin it has gorged: the loftiest fear
All that they would disdain to think were true:
Hypocrisy and custom make their minds
The fanes of many a worship, now outworn.
They dare not devise good for man's estate,
And yet they know not that they do not dare.
The good want power, but to weep barren tears.
The powerful goodness want: worse need for them.
The wise want love; and those who love want wisdom,
And all best things are thus confused to ill.
Many are strong and rich, and would be just,
But live among their suffering fellow-men
As if none felt: they know not what they do.

PROMETHEUS.

Thy words are like a cloud of wingèd snakes;
And yet I pity those they torture not.

FURY.

Thou pitiest them? I speak no more! [*Vanishes.*

PROMETHEUS.

Ah woe!
Ah woe! Alas! pain, pain ever, for ever!
I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
Thy works within my woe-illumèd mind,
Thou subtle tyrant! Peace is in the grave.
The grave hides all things beautiful and good:
I am a God and cannot find it there,
Nor would I seek it: for, though dread revenge,
This is defeat, fierce king, not victory.
The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul
With new endurance, till the hour arrives
When they shall be no types of things which are.

PANTHEA.

Alas! what sawest thou?

PROMETHEUS.

There are two woes;
To speak, and to behold; thou spare me one.
Names are there, Nature's sacred watchwords, they
Were borne aloft in bright emblazonry;
The nations thronged around, and cried aloud,
As with one voice, Truth, liberty, and love!
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven
Among them: there was strife, deceit, and fear:
Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil.
This was the shadow of the truth I saw.

One sound, beneath, around, above,
Was moving; 'twas the soul of love;
'Twas the hope, the prophecy,
Which begins and ends in thee.

SECOND SPIRIT.

A rainbow's arch stood on the sea
Which rocked beneath, immovably;
And the triumphant storm did flee,
Like a conqueror, swift and proud,
Between, with many a captive cloud,
A shapeless, dark and rapid crowd,
Each by lightning riven in half.
I heard the thunder hoarsely laugh·
Mighty fleets were strewn like chaff
And spread beneath a hell of death
O'er the white waters I alit
On a great ship lightning-split,
And speeded hither on the sigh
Of one who gave an enemy
His plank, then plunged aside to die.

THIRD SPIRIT.

I sate beside a sage's bed,
And the lamp was burning red
Near the book where he had fed,
When a Dream with plumes of flame,
To his pillow hovering came,
And I knew it was the same
Which had kindled long ago
Pity, eloquence, and woe;

Be it dim, and dank, and grey,
Like a storm-extinguished day,
Travelled o'er by dying gleams;
  Be it bright as all between
Cloudless skies and windless streams,
  Silent, liquid, and serene;
As the birds within the wind,
  As the fish within the wave,
As the thoughts of man's own mind
  Float thro' all above the grave;
We make there our liquid lair,
Voyaging cloudlike and unpent
Thro' the boundless element:
Thence we bear the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee!

IONE.

More yet come, one by one: the air around them
Looks radiant as the air around a star.

FIRST SPIRIT.

On a battle-trumpet's blast
I fled hither, fast, fast, fast,
'Mid the darkness upward cast.
From the dust of creeds outworn,
From the tyrant's banner torn,
Gathering 'round me, onward borne,
There was mingled many a cry—
Freedom! Hope! Death! Victory!
Till they faded thro' the sky;
And one sound, above, around,

One sound, beneath, around, above,
Was moving; 'twas the soul of love;
'Twas the hope, the prophecy,
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And I knew it was the same
Which had kindled long ago
Pity, eloquence, and woe;

And the world awhile below
Wore the shade, its lustre made.
It has borne me here as fleet
As Desire's lightning feet:
I must ride it back ere morrow,
Or the sage will wake in sorrow.

FOURTH SPIRIT.

On a poet's lips I slept
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept;
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the aërial kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illume
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality!
One of these awakened me,
And I sped to succour thee.

IONE.

Behold'st thou not two shapes from the east and west
Come, as two doves to one belovèd nest,
Twin nurslings of the all-sustaining air
On swift still wings glide down the atmosphere?
And, hark! their sweet, sad voices! 'tis despair
Mingled with love, and then dissolved in sound.

PANTHEA.

Canst thou speak, sister? all my words are drowned.

IONE.

Their beauty gives me voice. See how they float
On their sustaining wings of skiey grain,
Orange and azure deepening into gold:
Their soft smiles light the air like a star's fire.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

Hast thou beheld the form of Love?

FIFTH SPIRIT.

As over wide dominions
I sped, like some swift cloud that wings the wide air's wildernesses,
That planet-crested shape swept by on lightning-braided pinions,
Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial tresses:
His footsteps paved the world with light, but as I passed 'twas fading,
And hollow Ruin yawned behind great sages bound in madness,
And headless patriots, and pale youths who perished, unupbraiding,
Gleamed in the night. I wandered o'er, till thou, O King of sadness,
Turned by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected gladness.

And the world awhile below
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. elder brake,
ıen know
ı will blow:
nd Peace,
ıncrease,
ıls be
the prophecy
. ends in thee.

IONE.

SIXTH SPIRIT.

Ah, sister! Desolation is a delicate thing:
It walks not on the earth, it floats not on the air,
But treads with killing footstep, and fans with silent wing
The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and gentlest bear;
Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes above
And the music-stirring motion of its soft and busy feet,
Dream visions of aërial joy, and call the monster, Love,
And wake, and find the shadow Pain, as he whom now we greet.

CHORUS.

Tho' Ruin now Love's shadow be,
Following him, destroyingly,
On Death's white and wingèd steed,
Which the fleetest cannot flee,
Trampling down both flower and weed,
Man and beast, and foul and fair,
Like a tempest thro' the air;
Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,
Woundless though in heart or limb.

PROMETHEUS.

Spirits! how know ye this shall be?

CHORUS.

In the atmosphere we breathe,
As buds grow red when the snow-storms flee,
From spring gathering up beneath,

Whose mild winds shake the elder brake,
And the wandering herdsmen know
That the white-thorn soon will blow:
Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,
When they struggle to increase,
Are to us as soft winds be
To shepherd-boys, the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee.

IONE.

Where are the Spirits fled?

PANTHEA.

Only a sense
Remains of them, like the omnipotence
Of music, when the inspired voice and lute
Languish, ere yet the responses are mute,
Which thro' the deep and labyrinthine soul,
Like echoes thro' long caverns, wind and roll.

PROMETHEUS.

How fair these air-born shapes! And yet I feel
Most vain all hope but love; and thou art far,
Asia! who, when my being overflowed,
Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine
Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.
All things are still: alas! how heavily
This quiet morning weighs upon my heart,
Tho' I should dream I could even sleep with grief
If slumber were denied not. I would fain
Be what it is my destiny to be,

The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulph of things:
There is no agony, and no solace left;
Earth can console, Heaven can torment no more.

PANTHEA.

Hast thou forgotten one who watches thee
The cold dark night, and never sleeps but when
The shadow of thy spirit falls on her?

PROMETHEUS.

I said all hope was vain but love: thou lovest.

PANTHEA.

Deeply in truth; but the eastern star looks white,
And Asia waits in that far Indian vale
The scene of her sad exile; rugged once
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine;
But now invested with fair flowers and herbs,
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds, which flow
Among the woods and waters, from the æther
Of her transforming presence, which would fade
If it were mingled not with thine. Farewell!

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Morning. A lovely Vale in the Indian Caucasus.*
ASIA *alone.*

ASIA.

From all the blasts of heaven thou hast descended:
Yes, like a spirit, like a thought, which makes
Unwonted tears throng to the horny eyes,
And beatings haunt the desolated heart,
Which should have learnt repose: thou hast descended,
Cradled in tempests; thou dost wake, O Spring!
O child of many winds! As suddenly
Thou comest as the memory of a dream,
Which now is sad because it hath been sweet;
Like genius, or like joy which riseth up
As from the earth, clothing with golden clouds
The desart of our life.
This is the season, this the day, the hour;
At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet sister mine,
Too long desired, too long delaying, come!
How like death-worms the wingless moments crawl!
The point of one white star is quivering still
Deep in the orange light of widening morn
Beyond the purple mountains: thro' a chasm
Of wind-divided mist the darker lake
Reflects it: now it wanes: it gleams again

As the waves fade, and as the burning threads
Of woven cloud unravel in pale air:
'Tis lost! and through yon peaks of cloud-like snow
The roseate sunlight quivers: hear I not
The Æolian music of her sea-green plumes
Winnowing the crimson dawn? [PANTHEA *ent*
I feel, I see
Those eyes which burn thro' smiles that fade in tears,
Like stars half quenched in mists of silver dew.
Belovèd and most beautiful, who wearest
The shadow of that soul by which I live,
How late thou art! the spherèd sun had climbed
The sea; my heart was sick with hope, before
The printless air felt thy belated plumes.

PANTHEA.

Pardon, great Sister! but my wings were faint
With the delight of a remembered dream,
As are the noontide plumes of summer winds
Satiate with sweet flowers. I was wont to sleep
Peacefully, and awake refreshed and calm
Before the sacred Titan's fall, and thy
Unhappy love, had made, thro' use and pity,
Both love and woe familiar to my heart
As they had grown to thine: erewhile I slept
Under the glaucous caverns of old Ocean
Within dim bowers of green and purple moss,
Our young Ione's soft and milky arms
Locked then, as now, behind my dark moist hair,
While my shut eyes and cheek were pressed within
The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom:

But not as now, since I am made the wind
Which fails beneath the music that I bear
Of thy most wordless converse; since dissolved
Into the sense with which love talks, my rest
Was troubled and yet sweet; my waking hours
Too full of care and pain.

ASIA.

Lift up thine eyes,
And let me read thy dream

PANTHEA.

As I have said
With our sea-sister at his feet I slept.
The mountain mists, condensing at our voice
Under the moon, had spread their snowy flakes,
From the keen ice shielding our linkèd sleep.
Then two dreams came. One, I remember not.
But in the other his pale wound-worn limbs
Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of that form
Which lives unchanged within, and his voice fell
Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
Faint with intoxication of keen joy:
"Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world
With loveliness — more fair than aught but her
Whose shadow thou art — lift thine eyes on me."
I lifted them: the overpowering light
Of that immortal shape was shadowed o'er
By love; which, from his soft and flowing limbs,
And passion-parted lips, and keen, faint eyes,
Steamed forth like vaporous fire, an atmosphere

Which wrapped me in its all-dissolving power,
As the warm æther of the morning sun
Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.
I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
His presence flow and mingle thro' my blood
Till it became his life, and his grew mine,
And I was thus absorbed, until it past,
And like the vapours when the sun sinks down,
Gathering again in drops upon the pines,
And tremulous as they, in the deep night
My being was condensed; and, as the rays
Of thought were slowly gathered, I could hear
His voice, whose accents lingered ere they died
Like footsteps of weak melody: thy name
Among the many sounds alone I heard
Of what might be articulate; tho' still
I listened through the night when sound was none.
Ione wakened then, and said to me:
"Canst thou divine what troubles me to-night?
"I always knew what I desired before,
"Nor ever found delight to wish in vain.
"But now I cannot tell thee what I seek;
"I know not; something sweet, since it is sweet
"Even to desire; it is thy sport, false sister;
"Thou hast discovered some enchantment old,
"Whose spells have stolen my spirit as I slept
"And mingled it with thine: for when just now
"We kissed, I felt within thy parted lips
"The sweet air that sustained me, and the warmth
"Of the life-blood, for loss of which I faint,
"Quivered between our intertwining arms."

I answered not, for the Eastern star grew pale,
But fled to thee.

ASIA.

Thou speakest, but thy words
Are as the air: I feel them not: Oh, lift
Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul!

PANTHEA.

I lift them tho' they droop beneath the load
Of that they would express: what canst thou see
But thine own fairest shadow imaged there?

ASIA.

Thine eyes are like the deep, blue, boundless heaven
Contracted to two circles underneath
Their long fine lashes, dark, far, measureless,
Orb within orb, and line thro' line inwoven.

PANTHEA.

Why lookest thou as if a spirit past?

ASIA.

There is a change: beyond their inmost depth
I see a shade, a shape: 'tis He, arrayed
In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread
Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded moon.
Prometheus, it is thine! Depart not yet!
Say not those smiles that we shall meet again
Within that bright pavilion which their beams
Shall build on the waste world? The dream is told.

What shape is that between us? Its rude hair
Roughens the wind that lifts it, its regard
Is wild and quick, yet 'tis a thing of air,
For thro' its grey robe gleams the golden dew
Whose stars the noon has quenched not.

DREAM.

Follow! follow!

PANTHEA.

It is mine other dream.

ASIA.

It disappears.

PANTHEA.

It passes now into my mind. Methought
As we sate here, the flower-infolding buds
Burst on yon lightning-blasted almond-tree,
When swift from the white Scythian wilderness
A wind swept forth wrinkling the earth with frost:
I looked, and all the blossoms were blown down;
But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells
Of Hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief,
O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!

ASIA.

As you speak, your words
Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep
With shapes. Methought among the lawns together
We wandered, underneath the young grey dawn,
And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds
Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains
Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind;

And the white dew on the new bladed grass,
Just piercing the dark earth, hung silently:
And there was more which I remember not:
But on the shadows of the morning clouds,
Athwart the purple mountain slope, was written
Follow, O, follow! as they vanished by,
And on each herb, from which Heaven's dew had fallen,
The like was stamped, as with a withering fire,
A wind arose among the pines; it shook
The clinging music from their boughs, and then
Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,
Were heard: O, follow, follow, follow me!
And then I said: "Panthea, look on me."
But in the depth of those belovèd eyes
Still I saw, follow, follow!

Echo.

Follow, follow!

Panthea.

The crags, this clear spring morning, mock our voices
As they were spirit-tongued.

Asia.

It is some being
Around the crags. What fine clear sounds! O, list!

Echoes (*unseen*).

Echoes we: listen!
We cannot stay:
As dew-stars glisten
Then fade away—
Child of Ocean!

ASIA.

Hark! Spirits speak. The liquid responses
Of their aërial tongues yet sound.

PANTHEA.

I hear.

ECHOES.

O, follow, follow,
As our voice recedeth
Thro' the caverns hollow,
Where the forest spreadeth;

(*More distant.*)

O, follow, follow!
Thro' the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
Where the wild bee never flew,
Thro' the noon-tide darkness deep,
By the odour-breathing sleep
Of faint night flowers, and the waves
At the fountain-lighted caves,
While our music, wild and sweet,
Mocks thy gently falling feet,
Child of Ocean!

ASIA.

Shall we pursue the sound? It grows more faint
And distant.

PANTHEA.

List! the strain floats nearer now.

ECHOES.

In the world unknown
  Sleeps a voice unspoken;
By thy step alone
    Can its rest be broken;
      Child of Ocean!

ASIA.

How the notes sink upon the ebbing wind!

ECHOES.

O, follow, follow,
Thro' the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
By the woodland noon-tide dew;
By the forests, lakes, and fountains
Thro' the many-folded mountains;
To the rents and gulphs, and chasms,
Where the Earth reposed from spasms,
On the day when He and thou
Parted, to commingle now;
  Child of Ocean!

ASIA.

Come, sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine,
And follow, ere the voices fade away.

SCENE II.—*A Forest, intermingled with Rocks and Caverns.* ASIA *and* PANTHEA *pass into it. Two young Fauns are sitting on a Rock, listening.*

SEMICHORUS I. OF SPIRITS.

The path thro' which that lovely twain
  Have past, by cedar, pine, and yew,

And each dark tree that ever grew,
Is curtained out from Heaven's wide blue;
Nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain,
Can pierce its interwoven bowers,
Nor aught, save where some cloud of dew,
Drifted along the earth-creeping breeze,
Between the trunks of the hoar trees,
Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers
Of the green laurel, blown anew;
And bends, and then fades silently,
One frail and fair anemone:
Or when some star of many a one
That climbs and wanders thro' steep night,
Has found the cleft thro' which alone
Beams fall from high those depths upon
Ere it is borne away, away,
By the swift Heavens that cannot stay,
It scatters drops of golden light,
Like lines of rain that ne'er unite:
And the gloom divine is all around;
And underneath is the mossy ground.

SEMICHORUS II.

There the voluptuous nightingales,
Are awake thro' all the broad noonday.
When one with bliss or sadness fails,
And thro' the windless ivy-boughs,
Sick with sweet love, droops dying away
On its mate's music-panting bosom;
Another from the swinging blossom,
Watching to catch the languid close

Of the last strain, then lifts on high
The wings of the weak melody,
Till some new strain of feeling bear
The song, and all the woods are mute;
When there is heard thro' the dim air
The rush of wings, and rising there
Like many a lake-surrounded flute,
Sounds overflow the listener's brain
So sweet, that joy is almost pain.

SEMICHORUS I.

There those enchanted eddies play
Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,
By Demogorgon's mighty law,
With melting rapture, or sweet awe,
All spirits on that secret way;
As inland boats are driven to Ocean
Down streams made strong with mountain-thaw:
And first there comes a gentle sound
To those in talk or slumber bound,
And wakes the destined. Soft emotion
Attracts, impels them: those who saw
Say from the breathing earth behind
There steams a plume-uplifting wind
Which drives them on their path, while they
Believe their own swift wings and feet
The sweet desires within obey:
And so they float upon their way,
Until, still sweet, but loud and strong,
The storm of sound is driven along,

Sucked up and hurrying: as they fleet
Behind, its gathering billows meet
And to the fatal mountain bear
Like clouds amid the yielding air.

FIRST FAUN.

Canst thou imagine where those spirits live
Which make such delicate music in the woods?
We haunt within the least frequented caves
And closest coverts, and we know these wilds,
Yet never meet them, tho' we hear them oft:
Where may they hide themselves?

SECOND FAUN.

'Tis hard to tell:
I have heard those more skilled in spirits say,
The bubbles, which the enchantment of the sun
Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave
The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
Are the pavilions where such dwell and float
Under the green and golden atmosphere
Which noon-tide kindles thro' the woven leaves;
And when these burst, and the thin fiery air,
The which they breathed within those lucent domes,
Ascends to flow like meteors thro' the night,
They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed,
And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire
Under the waters of the earth again.

FIRST FAUN.

If such live thus, have others other lives,
Under pink blossoms or within the bells

Of meadow flowers, or folded violets deep,
Or on their dying odours, when they die,
Or in the sunlight of the spherèd dew?

SECOND FAUN.

Aye, many more which we may well divine.
But, should we stay to speak, noon-tide would come,
And thwart Silenus find his goats undrawn,
And grudge to sing those wise and lovely songs
Of fate, and chance, and God, and Chaos old,
And Love, and the chained Titan's woful doom,
And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth
One brotherhood · delightful strains which cheer
Our solitary twilights, and which charm
To silence the unenvying nightingales.

SCENE III. — *A Pinnacle of Rock among Mountains.* ASIA *and* PANTHEA.

PANTHEA.

Hither the sound has borne us — to the realm
Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal,
Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up
Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,
And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy,
That maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain
To deep intoxication; and uplift
Like Mænads who cry loud, Evoe! Evoe!
The voice which is contagion to the world.

Is loosened, and the nations echo round,
Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

PANTHEA.

Look how the gusty sea of mist is breaking
In crimson foam, even at our feet! it rises
As Ocean at the enchantment of the moon
Round foodless men wrecked on some oozy isle.

ASIA.

The fragments of the cloud are scattered up;
The wind that lifts them disentwines my hair;
Its billows now sweep o'er mine eyes; my brain
Grows dizzy; I see thin shapes within the mist.

PANTHEA.

A countenance with beckoning smiles there burns
An azure fire within its golden locks!
Another and another: hark! they speak!

SONG OF SPIRITS.

To the deep, to the deep,
Down, down!
Through the shade of sleep,
Through the cloudy strife
Of Death and of Life,
Through the veil and the bar
Of things which seem and are
Even to the steps of the remotest throne,
Down, down!

While the sound whirls around
Down, down!
As the fawn draws the hound,
As the lightning the vapour,
As a weak moth the taper;
Death, despair; love, sorrow;
Time, both; to-day, to-morrow;
As steel obeys the spirit of the stone,
Down, down!

Through the grey, void abysm,
Down, down!
Where the air is no prism,
And the moon and stars are not,
And the cavern-crags wear not
The radiance of Heaven
Nor the gloom to Earth given,
Where there is one pervading, one alone,
Down, down!

In the depth of the deep,
Down, down!
Like veiled lightning asleep,
Like the spark nursed in embers,
The last look Love remembers,
Like a diamond, which shines
On the dark wealth of mines,
A spell is treasured but for thee alone.
Down, down!

We have bound thee, we guide thee;
Down, down!

With the bright form beside thee;
Resist not the weakness,
Such strength is in meekness
That the Eternal, the Immortal,
Must unloose through life's portal
The snake-like Doom coiled underneath his
throne
By that alone.

SCENE IV.—*The Cave of* DEMOGORGON. ASIA *and* PANTHEA.

PANTHEA.

What veiled form sits on that ebon throne?

ASIA.

The veil has fallen.

PANTHEA.

I see a mighty darkness
Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom
Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,
Ungazed upon and shapeless, neither limb,
Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is
A living Spirit.

DEMOGORGON.

Ask what thou wouldst know.

ASIA.

What canst thou tell?

DEMOGORGON.

All things thou dar'st demand.

ASIA.

Who made the living world?

DEMOGORGON.

God.

ASIA.

Who made all
That it contains? thought, passion, reason, will,
Imagination?

DEMOGORGON.

God: Almighty God.

ASIA.

Who made that sense which, when the winds of spring
In rarest visitation, or the voice
Of one belovèd heard in youth alone,
Fills the faint eyes with falling tears which dim
The radiant looks of unbewailing flowers,
And leaves this peopled earth a solitude
When it returns no more?

DEMOGORGON.

Merciful God.

ASIA.

And who made terror, madness, crime, remorse,
Which from the links of the great chain of things,
To every thought within the mind of man
Sway and drag heavily, and each one reels
Under the load towards the pit of death;
Abandoned hope, and love that turns to hate;

And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood;
Pain, whose unheeded and familiar speech
Is howling, and keen shrieks, day after day;
And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell?

DEMOGORGON.

He reigns.

ASIA.

Utter his name a world pining in pain
Asks but his name curses shall drag him down.

DEMOGORGON.

He reigns.

ASIA.

I feel, I know it who?

DEMOGORGON.

He reigns.

ASIA

Who reigns? There was the Heaven and Earth at first,
And Light and Love, then Saturn, from whose throne
Time fell, an envious shadow such the state
Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway,
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
Before the wind or sun has withered them
And semivital worms, but he refused
The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought
Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love,
For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus

Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And, with this law alone, 'Let man be free,'
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith, nor love, nor law; to be
Omnipotent but friendless is to reign;
And Jove now reigned; for on the race of man
First famine, and then toil, and then disease,
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
Fell; and the unseasonable seasons drove
With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain-caves:
And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent,
And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle
Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes
Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart;
And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,
Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath
The frown of man; and tortured to his will
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe;
And science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,

Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;
And music lifted up the listening spirit
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;
And human hands first mimicked and then mocked,
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
The human form, till marble grew divine;
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,
And Disease drank and slept Death grew like sleep.
He taught the implicated orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering stars; and how the sun
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell
The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye
Gazes not on the interlunar sea.
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-wingèd chariots of the Ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
The warm winds, and the azure æther shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
Such, the alleviations of his state,
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain but who rains down
Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while
Man looks on his creation like a God
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone?

Not Jove: while yet his frown shook heaven, aye, when
His adversary from adamantine chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master? Is he too a slave?

DEMOGORGON.

All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil:
Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no.

ASIA.

Whom called'st thou God?

DEMOGORGON.

I spoke but as ye speak,
For Jove is the supreme of living things.

ASIA.

Who is master of the slave?

DEMOGORGON.

If the abysm
Could vomit forth his secrets . . . But a voice
Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless;
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
On the revolving world? What to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love.

ASIA.

So much I asked before, and my heart gave
The response thou hast given; and of such truths

Each to itself must be the oracle.
One more demand; and do thou answer me
As my own soul would answer, did it know
That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise
Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world:
When shall the destined hour arrive?

DEMOGORGON.

Behold!

ASIA.

The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night
I see cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd steeds
Which trample the dim winds: in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.
Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars:
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before,
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair: they all
Sweep onward.

DEMOGORGON.

These are the immortal Hours,
Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.

ASIA.

A spirit with a dreadful countenance
Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulph.
Unlike thy brethren, ghastly charioteer,
Who art thou? Whither wouldst thou bear me? Speak!

Spirit.

I am the shadow of a destiny
More dread than is my aspect: ere yon planet
Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne.

Asia.

What meanest thou?

Panthea.

That terrible shadow floats
Up from its throne, as may the lurid smoke
Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea.
Lo! it ascends the car; the coursers fly
Terrified: watch its path among the stars
Blackening the night!

Asia.

Thus I am answered: strange!

Panthea.

See, near the verge, another chariot stays;
An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,
Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
Of delicate strange tracery; the young spirit
That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope;
How its soft smiles attract the soul! as light
Lures wingèd insects through the lampless air.

Spirit.

My coursers are fed with the lightning,
They drink of the whirlwind's stream,
And when the red morning is bright'ning

They bathe in the fresh sunbeam;
They have strength for their swiftness I deem,
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

I desire: and their speed makes night kindle;
I fear: they outstrip the Typhoon;
Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle
We encircle the earth and the moon:
We shall rest from long labours at noon:
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

SCENE V.—*The Car pauses within a Cloud on the Top of a snowy Mountain.* ASIA, PANTHEA, *and the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

SPIRIT.

On the brink of the night and the morning
My coursers are wont to respire,
But the Earth has just whispered a warning
That their flight must be swifter than fire:
They shall drink the hot speed of desire!

ASIA.

Thou breathest on their nostrils, but my breath
Would give them swifter speed.

SPIRIT.

Alas! it could not.

PANTHEA.

Oh Spirit! pause, and tell whence is the light
Which fills the cloud? The sun is yet unrisen.

SPIRIT.

The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo
Is held in heaven by wonder; and the light
Which fills this vapour, as the aërial hue
Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,
Flows from thy mighty sister.

PANTHEA.

Yes, I feel—

ASIA.

What is it with thee, sister? Thou art pale.

PANTHEA.

How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
Is working in the elements, which suffer
Thy presence thus unveiled. The Nereids tell
That on the day when the clear hyaline
Was cloven at thy uprise, and thou didst stand
Within a veinèd shell, which floated on
Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,
Among the Ægean isles, and by the shores
Which bear thy name; love, like the atmosphere
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven
And the deep ocean and the sunless caves
And all that dwells within them; till grief cast
Eclipse upon the soul from which it came:
Such art thou now; nor is it I alone,

Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,
But the whole world which seeks thy sympathy.
Hear'st thou not sounds i' the air which speak the love
Of all articulate beings? Feel'st thou not
The inanimate winds enamoured of thee? List!

[*Musi*

ASIA.

Thy words are sweeter than aught else but his
Whose echoes they are: yet all love is sweet,
Given or returned. Common as light is love,
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.
Like the wide heaven, the all-sustaining air,
It makes the reptile equal to the God:
They who inspire it most are fortunate,
As I am now; but those who feel it most
Are happier still, after long sufferings,
As I shall soon become.

PANTHEA.

List! Spirits speak.

VOICE *in the Air, singing*

Life of Life! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them;
And thy smiles before they dwindle
Make the cold air fire; then screen them
In those looks, where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light! thy limbs are burning
Thro' the vest which seems to hide them;
As the radiant lines of morning

Thro' the clouds ere they divide them;
And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others; none beholds thee,
But thy voice sounds low and tender
Like the fairest, for it folds thee
From the sight, that liquid splendour,
And all feel, yet see thee never,
As I feel now, lost for ever!

Lamp of Earth! where'er thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!

ASIA.

My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
And thine doth like an angel sit
Beside the helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever, for ever,
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses,
A paradise of wildernesses!
Till, like one in slumber bound,
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound:

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions
In music's most serene dominions;
Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.
And we sail on, away, afar,
Without a course, without a star,
But, by the instinct of sweet music driven;
Till through Elysian garden islets
By thee, most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnace glided,
The boat of my desire is guided:
Realms where the air we breathe is love,
Which in the winds and on the waves doth move,
Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

We have past Age's icy caves,
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray:
Beyond the glassy gulphs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day:
A paradise of vaulted bowers,
Lit by downward-gazing flowers,
And watery paths that wind between
Wildernesses calm and green,
Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
And rest, having beheld; somewhat like thee;
Which walk upon the sea, and chaunt melodiously!

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Heaven.* JUPITER *on his Throne;* THETIS
the other Deities assembled.

JUPITER.

Ye congregated powers of heaven, who share
The glory and the strength of him ye serve,
Rejoice! henceforth I am omnipotent.
All else had been subdued to me; alone
The soul of man, like unextinguished fire,
Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doul
And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
Hurling up insurrection, which might make
Our antique empire insecure, though built
On eldest faith, and hell's coeval, fear;
And tho' my curses thro' the pendulous air,
Like snow on herbless peaks, fall flake by flake,
And cling to it; tho' under my wrath's might
It climb the crags of life, step after step,
Which wound it, as ice wounds unsandalled feet,
It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
Aspiring, unrepressed, yet soon to fall:
Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
That fatal child, the terror of the earth,
Who waits but till the destined hour arrive,

Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld
To redescend, and trample out the spark.

Pour forth heaven's wine, Idæn Ganymede,
And let it fill the Dædal cups like fire,
And from the flower-inwoven soil divine
Ye all-triumphant harmonies arise,
As dew from earth under the twilight stars:
Drink! be the nectar circling thro' your veins
The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods,
Till exultation burst in one wide voice
Like music from Elysian winds.
And thou
Ascend beside me, veilèd in the light
Of the desire which makes thee one with me,
Thetis, bright image of eternity!
When thou didst cry, "Insufferable might!
God! spare me! I sustain not the quick flames,
The penetrating presence; all my being,
Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw
Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,
Sinking thro' its foundations:" even then
Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third
Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,
Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld,
Waiting the incarnation, which ascends
(Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
Griding the winds?) from Demogorgon's throne.
Victory! victory! Feel'st thou not, O world,

The earthquake of his chariot thundering up
Olympus?

[*The Car of the* HOUR *arrives.* DEMOGORGON *descends, and moves towards the Throne of* JUPITER.

Awful shape, what art thou? Speak!

DEMOGORGON.

Eternity. Demand no direr name.
Descend, and follow me down the abyss.
I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;
Mightier than thee: and we must dwell together
Henceforth in darkness. Lift thy lightnings not.
The tyranny of heaven none may retain,
Or reassume, or hold, succeeding thee:
Yet if thou wilt, as 'tis the destiny
Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead,
Put forth thy might.

JUPITER.

Detested prodigy!
Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons
I trample thee! thou lingerest?

Mercy! mercy!
No pity, no release, no respite! Oh,
That thou wouldst make mine enemy my judge,
Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge,
On Caucasus! he would not doom me thus.
Gentle, and just, and dreadless, is he not
The monarch of the world? What then art thou?
No refuge! no appeal!

Sink with me then,

We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shoreless sea. Let hell unlock
Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire,
And whelm on them into the bottomless void
This desolated world, and thee, and me,
The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck
Of that for which they combated!
Ai! Ai!
The elements obey me not. I sink
Dizzily down, ever, for ever, down.
And, like a cloud, mine enemy above
Darkens my fall with victory! Ai, Ai!

SCENE II. — *The Mouth of a great River in the Island Atlantis.* OCEAN *is discovered reclining near the Shore;* APOLLO *stands beside him.*

OCEAN.

He fell, thou sayest, beneath his conqueror's frown?

APOLLO.

Aye, when the strife was ended which made dim
The orb I rule, and shook the solid stars,
The terrors of his eye illumined heaven
With sanguine light, through the thick ragged skirts
Of the victorious darkness, as he fell:
Like the last glare of day's red agony,
Which, from a rent among the fiery clouds,
Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep.

OCEAN.

He sunk to the abyss? To the dark void?

APOLLO.

An eagle so caught in some bursting cloud
On Caucasus, his thunder-baffled wings
Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes
Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded
By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail
Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at length
Prone, and the aërial ice clings over it.

OCEAN.

Henceforth the fields of Heaven-reflecting sea
Which are my realm, will heave, unstained with blood,
Beneath the uplifting winds, like plains of corn
Swayed by the summer air; my streams will flow
Round many-peopled continents, and round
Fortunate isles; and from their glassy thrones
Blue Proteus and his humid nymphs shall mark
The shadow of fair ships, as mortals see
The floating bark of the light-laden moon
With that white star, its sightless pilot's crest,
Borne down the rapid sunset's ebbing sea;
Tracking their path no more by blood and groans,
And desolation, and the mingled voice
Of slavery and command; but by the light
Of wave-reflected flowers, and floating odours,
And music soft, and mild, free, gentle voices,
And sweetest music, such as spirits love.

APOLLO.

And I shall gaze not on the deeds which make
My mind obscure with sorrow, as eclipse
Darkens the sphere I guide; but list, I hear
The small, clear, silver lute of the young Spirit
That sits i' the morning star.

OCEAN.

Thou must away;
Thy steeds will pause at even, till when farewell:
The loud deep calls me home even now to feed it
With azure calm out of the emerald urns
Which stand for ever full beside my throne.
Behold the Nereids under the green sea,
Their wavering limbs borne on the wind-like stream,
Their white arms lifted o'er their streaming hair
With garlands pied and starry sea-flower crowns,
Hastening to grace their mighty sister's joy.
[*A sound of waves is heard.*
It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm.
Peace, monster, I come now. Farewell.

APOLLO.

Farewell.

OCEAN.

He sunk to the abyss? To the dark void?

APOLLO.

An eagle so caught in some bursting cloud
On Caucasus, his thunder-baffled wings
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APOLLO.

Farewell.

SCENE III.—*Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS, HERCULES, IONE, *the* EARTH, SPIRITS, ASIA *and* PANTHEA, *borne in the Car with the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

HERCULES *unbinds* PROMETHEUS, *who descends.*

HERCULES.

Most glorious among spirits, thus doth strength
To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,
And thee, who art the form they animate,
Minister like a slave.

PROMETHEUS.

Thy gentle words
: sweeter even than freedom long desired
d long delayed.
Asia, thou light of life,
dow of beauty unbeheld: and ye,
r sister nymphs, who made long years of pain
eet to remember, thro' your love and care:
Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave,
All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,
And paved with veinèd emerald, and a fountain
Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.
From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears
Like snow, or silver, or long diamond spires,
Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light:
And there is heard the ever-moving air,
Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,
And bees; and all around are mossy seats,
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass;

A simple dwelling, which shall be our own;
Where we will sit and talk of time and change,
As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.
What can hide man from mutability?
And if ye sigh, then I will smile; and thou,
Ione, shalt chaunt fragments of sea-music,
Until I weep, when ye shall smile away
The tears she brought, which yet were sweet to shed.
We will entangle buds and flowers and beams
Which twinkle on the fountain's brim, and make
Strange combinations out of common things,
Like human babes in their brief innocence;
And we will search, with looks and words of love,
For hidden thoughts, each lovelier than the last,
Our unexhausted spirits; and like lutes
Touched by the skill of the enamoured wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be;
And hither come, sped on the charmèd winds,
Which meet from all the points of heaven, as bees
From every flower aërial Enna feeds,
At their own island-homes in Himera
The echoes of the human world, which tell
Of the low voice of love, almost unheard,
And dove-eyed pity's murmured pain, and music,
Itself the echo of the heart, and all
That tempers or improves man's life, now free;
And lovely apparitions, dim at first,
Then radiant, as the mind, arising bright
From the embrace of beauty, whence the forms
Of which these are the phantoms, casts on them

The gathered rays which are reality,
Shall visit us, the progeny immortal
Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy,
And arts, tho' unimagined, yet to be.
The wandering voices and the shadows these
Of all that man becomes, the mediators
Of that best worship love, by him and us
Given and returned; swift shapes and sounds, which grow
More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind,
And, veil by veil, evil and error fall:
Such virtue has the cave and place around.
[*Turning to the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.
For thee, fair Spirit, one toil remains. Ione,
Give her that curvèd shell, which Proteus old
Made Asia's nuptial boon, breathing within it
A voice to be accomplished, and which thou
Didst hide in grass under the hollow rock.

IONE.

Thou most desired Hour, more loved and lovely
Than all thy sisters, this is the mystic shell;
See the pale azure fading into silver
Lining it with a soft yet glowing light:
Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there?

SPIRIT.

It seems in truth the fairest shell of Ocean:
Its sound must be at once both sweet and strange.

PROMETHEUS.

Go, borne over the cities of mankind
On whirlwind-footed coursers: once again

Outspeed the sun around the orbed world;
And as thy chariot cleaves the kindling air,
Thou breathe into the many-folded shell,
Loosening its mighty music; it shall be
As thunder mingled with clear echoes: then
Return; and thou shalt dwell beside our cave.
And thou, O, Mother Earth!—

THE EARTH.

I hear, I feel;
Thy lips are on me, and thy touch runs down
Even to the adamantine central gloom
Along these marble nerves; 'tis life, 'tis joy,
And thro' my withered, old, and icy frame
The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down
Circling. Henceforth the many children fair
Folded in my sustaining arms; all plants,
And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-winged,
And birds, and beasts, and fish, and human shapes,
Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom,
Draining the poison of despair, shall take
And interchange sweet nutriment. To me
Shall they become like sister-antelopes
By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,
Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream.
The dew-mists of my sunless sleep shall float
Under the stars like balm: night-folded flowers
Shall suck unwithering hues in their repose:
And men and beasts in happy dreams shall gather
Strength for the coming day, and all its joy:
And death shall be the last embrace of her

Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother
Folding her child, says, "Leave me not again."

ASIA.

Oh, mother! wherefore speak the name of death?
Cease they to love, and move, and breathe, and speak,
Who die?

THE EARTH.

It would avail not to reply:
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
But to the uncommunicating dead.
Death is the veil which those who live call life:
They sleep, and it is lifted: and meanwhile
In mild variety the seasons mild
With rainbow-skirted showers, and odorous winds,
And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,
And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun's
All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain
Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild,
Shall clothe the forests and the fields, aye, even
The crag-built desarts of the barren deep,
With ever-living leaves, and fruits, and flowers.
And thou! There is a cavern where my spirit
Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain
Made my heart mad, and those who did inhale it
Became mad too, and built a temple there,
And spoke, and were oracular, and lured
The erring nations round to mutual war,
And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee;
Which breath now rises, as amongst tall weeds
A violet's exhalation, and it fills

With a serener light and crimson air,
Intense, yet soft, the rocks and woods around;
It feeds the quick growth of the serpent vine,
And the dark linkèd ivy tangling wild,
And budding, blown, or odour-faded blooms
Which star the winds with points of coloured light,
As they rain thro' them, and bright golden globes
Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven,
And thro' their veinèd leaves and amber stems
The flowers whose purple and translucent bowls
Stand ever mantling with aërial dew,
The drink of spirits: and it circles round,
Like the soft waving wings of noonday dreams,
Inspiring calm and happy thoughts, like mine,
Now thou art thus restored. This cave is thine.
Arise! Appear!

[*A Spirit rises in the likeness of a winged child.*

This is my torch-bearer;
Who let his lamp out in old time with gazing
On eyes from which he kindled it anew
With love, which is as fire, sweet daughter mine,
For such is that within thine own. Run, wayward,
And guide this company beyond the peak
Of Bacchic Nysa, Mænad-haunted mountain,
And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers,
Trampling the torrent streams and glassy lakes
With feet unwet, unwearied, undelaying,
And up the green ravine, across the vale,
Beside the windless and crystàlline pool
Where ever lies, on unerasing waves,
The image of a temple, built above,

Distinct with column, arch, and architrave,
And palm-like capital, and over-wrought,
And populous most with living imagery,
Praxitelean shapes, whose marble smiles
Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.
It is deserted now, but once it bore
Thy name, Prometheus; there the emulous youths
Bore to thy honour thro' the divine gloom
The lamp which was thine emblem; even as those
Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope
Into the grave, across the night of life,
As thou hast borne it most triumphantly
To this far goal of Time. Depart, farewell.
Beside that temple is the destined cave.

SCENE [illegible] —*A Forest. In the Background a Cave.* PROMETHEUS, ASIA, PANTHEA, IONE, *and the* SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

IONE.

Sister, it is not earthly: how it glides
Under the leaves! how on its head there burns
A light like a green star, whose emerald beams
Are twined with its fair hair! how, as it moves,
The splendour drops in flakes upon the grass!
Knowest thou it?

PANTHEA.

It is the delicate spirit
That guides the earth thro' heaven. From afar
The populous constellations call that light
The loveliest of the planets; and sometimes

It floats along the spray of the salt sea,
Or makes its chariot of a foggy cloud,
Or walks thro' fields or cities while men sleep,
Or o'er the mountain-tops, or down the rivers,
Or through the green waste wilderness, as now,
Wondering at all it sees. Before Jove reigned
It loved our sister Asia, and it came
Each leisure hour to drink the liquid light
Out of her eyes, for which it said it thirsted
As one bit by a dipsas, and with her
It made its childish confidence, and told her
All it had known or seen, for it saw much,
Yet idly reasoned what it saw; and called her,
For whence it sprung it knew not, nor do I,
Mother, dear mother.

THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH (*running to Asia*).

Mother, dearest mother;
May I then talk with thee as I was wont?
May I then hide my eyes in thy soft arms,
After thy looks have made them tired of joy?
May I then play beside thee the long noons,
When work is none in the bright silent air?

ASIA.

I love thee, gentlest being, and henceforth
Can cherish thee unenvied: speak, I pray:
Thy simple talk once solaced, now delights.

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

Mother, I am grown wiser, though a child
Cannot be wise like thee, within this day;

And happier too; happier and wiser both.
Thou knowest that toads, and snakes, and loathly worms,
And venomous and malicious beasts, and boughs
That bore ill berries in the woods, were ever
An hindrance to my walks o'er the green world:
And that, among the haunts of humankind,
Hard-featured men, or with proud, angry looks,
Or cold, staid gait, or false and hollow smiles,
Or the dull sneer of self-loved ignorance,
Or other such foul masks, with which ill thoughts
Hide that fair being whom we spirits call man;
And women too, ugliest of all things evil,
(Tho' fair, even in a world where thou art fair,
When good and kind, free and sincere like thee,)
When false or frowning made me sick at heart
To pass them, tho' they slept, and I unseen.
Well, my path lately lay thro' a great city
Into the woody hills surrounding it:
A sentinel was sleeping at the gate:
When there was heard a sound, so loud, it shook
The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet
Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all;
A long, long sound, as it would never end:
And all the inhabitants leapt suddenly
Out of their rest, and gathered in the streets,
Looking in wonder up to Heaven, while yet
The music pealed along. I hid myself
Within a fountain in the public square,
Where I lay like the reflex of the moon
Seen in a wave under green leaves; and soon
Those ugly human shapes and visages

Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain,
Past floating thro' the air, and fading still
Into the winds that scattered them; and those
From whom they past seemed mild and lovely forms
After some foul disguise had fallen, and all
Were somewhat changed, and after brief surprise
And greetings of delighted wonder, all
Went to their sleep again: and when the dawn
Came, would'st thou think that toads, and snakes, and
efts,
Could e'er be beautiful? yet so they were,
And that with little change of shape or hue:
All things had put their evil nature off:
I cannot tell my joy, when o'er a lake
Upon a drooping bough with night-shade twined,
I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward
And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries,
With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay
Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky;
So with my thoughts full of these happy changes,
We meet again, the happiest change of all.

ASIA.

And never will we part, till thy chaste sister
Who guides the frozen and inconstant moon
Will look on thy more warm and equal light
Till her heart thaw like flakes of April snow
And love thee.

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

What; as Asia loves Prometheus?

ASIA.

Peace, wanton, thou art yet not old enough.
Think ye by gazing on each other's eyes
To multiply your lovely selves, and fill
With spherèd fires the interlunar air?

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

Nay, mother, while my sister trims her lamp
'Tis hard I should go darkling.

ASIA.

Listen; look!

[*The* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR *enters.*

PROMETHEUS.

We feel what thou hast heard and seen: yet speak.

SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder filled
The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,
There was a change: the impalpable thin air
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,
As if the sense of love dissolved in them
Had folded itself round the spherèd world.
My vision then grew clear, and I could see
Into the mysteries of the universe:
Dizzy as with delight I floated down,
Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes,
My coursers sought their birthplace in the sun,
Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil
Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire.
And where my moonlike car will stand within

A temple, gazed upon by Phidian forms
Of thee, and Asia, and the Earth, and me,
And you fair nymphs looking the love we feel;
In memory of the tidings it has borne;
Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,
Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone,
And open to the bright and liquid sky.
Yoked to it by an amphisbenic snake
The likeness of those wingèd steeds will mock
The flight from which they find repose. Alas,
Whither has wandered now my partial tongue
When all remains untold which ye would hear?
As I have said I floated to the earth:
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss
To move, to breathe, to be; I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within,
Expressed in outward things; but soon I looked,
And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked
One with the other even as spirits do,
None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or fear,
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
"All hope abandon ye who enter here;"
None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
Until the subject of a tyrant's will
Became, worse fate, the abject of his own,
Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines

Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak;
None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart
The sparks of love and hope till there remained
Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill;
None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes,
Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.
And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
On the wide earth, past; gentle radiant forms,
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be,
Yet being now, made earth like heaven; nor pride,
Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill-shame,
The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.

Thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons,—wherein,
And beside which, by wretched men were borne
Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes
Of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,—
Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,
The ghosts of a no more-remembered fame,
Which, from their unworn obelisks, look forth
In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs
Of those who were their conquerors, mouldering round.

Those imaged, to the pride of kings and priests,
A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide
As is the world it wasted, — and are now
But an astonishment. Even so the tools
And emblems of its last captivity,
Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,
Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.
And those foul shapes, abhorred by god and man,
Which, under many a name and many a form
Strange, savage, ghastly, dark and execrable,
Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the world, —
And which the nations, panic-stricken, served
With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love
Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless,
And slain among men's unreclaiming tears,
Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate, —
Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandoned shrines.
The painted veil, — by those who were, called life, —
Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
All men believed and hoped, is torn aside.
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains, —
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man:
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but man.
Passionless? no: — yet free from guilt or pain, —
Which were, for his will made or suffered them,
Nor yet exempt, tho' ruling them like slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability, —
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

ACT IV.

SCENE, *A part of the Forest near the Cave of* PROMETHEUS. PANTHEA *and* IONE *are sleeping: they awaken gradually during the first Song.*

VOICE *of Unseen Spirits.*

The pale stars are gone!
For the sun, their swift shepherd,
To their folds them compelling,
In the depths of the dawn,
Hastes, in meteor-eclipsing array, and they flee
Beyond his blue dwelling,
As fawns flee the leopard.
But where are ye?

A train of dark Forms and Shadows passes by confusedly, singing.

Here, oh, here:
We bear the bier
Of the Father of many a cancelled year!
Spectres we
Of the dead Hours be,
We bear Time to his tomb in eternity.

Strew, oh, strew
Hair, not yew!
Wet the dusty pall with tears, not dew!

Be the faded flowers
Of Death's bare bowers
Spread on the corpse of the King of Hours!

Haste, oh, haste!
As shades are chased,
Trembling, by day, from heaven's blue waste.
We melt away,
Like dissolving spray,
From the children of a diviner day,
With the lullaby
Of winds that die
On the bosom of their own harmony!

IONE.

What dark forms were they?

PANTHEA.

The past Hours weak and grey,
With the spoil which their toil
Raked together
From the conquest but One could foil.

IONE.

Have they past?

PANTHEA.

They have past;
They outspeeded the blast,
While 'tis said, they are fled:

IONE.

Whither, oh, whither?

PANTHEA.

To the dark, to the past, to the dead.

VOICE *of Unseen Spirits.*

Bright clouds float in heaven,
Dew-stars gleam on earth,
Waves assemble on ocean,
They are gathered and driven
By the storm of delight, by the panic of glee!
They shake with emotion,
They dance in their mirth.
But where are ye?

The pine boughs are singing
Old songs with new gladness,
The billows and fountains
Fresh music are flinging,
Like the notes of a spirit from land and from sea;
The storms mock the mountains
With the thunder of gladness.
But where are ye?

IONE.

What charioteers are these?

PANTHEA.

Where are their chariots?

SEMICHORUS OF HOURS.

The voice of the Spirits of Air and of Earth
Have drawn back the figured curtain of sleep
Which covered our being and darkened our birth
In the deep.

A VOICE.

In the deep?

SEMICHORUS II.

Oh, below the deep.

SEMICHORUS I.

An hundred ages we had been kept
Cradled in visions of hate and care,
And each one who waked as his brother slept,
Found the truth —

SEMICHORUS II.

Worse than his visions were!

SEMICHORUS I.

We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep;
We have known the voice of Love in dreams,
We have felt the wand of Power, and leap —

SEMICHORUS II.

As the billows leap in the morning beams!

CHORUS.

Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,
Pierce with song heaven's silent light,
Enchant the day that too swiftly flees,
To check its flight ere the cave of night.

Once the hungry Hours were hounds
Which chased the day like a bleeding deer,
And it limped and stumbled with many wounds
Through the nightly dells of the desart year.

But now, oh weave the mystic measure
Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,
Let the Hours, and the spirits of might and pleasure,
Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.

A VOICE.

Unite

PANTHEA.

See, where the Spirits of the human mind
Wrapped in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

We join the throng
Of the dance and the song,
By the whirlwind of gladness borne along;
As the flying-fish leap
From the Indian deep,
And mix with the sea-birds, half asleep.

CHORUS OF HOURS.

Whence come ye, so wild and so fleet,
For sandals of lightning are on your feet,
And your wings are soft and swift as thought,
And your eyes are as love which is veilèd not?

CHORUS OF SPIRITS OF THE MIND.

We come from the mind
Of human kind,
Which was late so dusk, and obscene, and blind,
Now 'tis an ocean
Of clear emotion,
A heaven of serene and mighty motion.

From that deep abyss
Of wonder and bliss,
Whose caverns are crystal palaces;
From those skiey towers
Where Thought's crowned powers
Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours!

From the dim recesses
Of woven caresses,
Where lovers catch ye by your loose tresses;
From the azure isles,
Where sweet Wisdom smiles,
Delaying your ships with her siren wiles.

From the temples high
Of Man's ear and eye,
Roofed over Sculpture and Poesy;
From the murmurings
Of the unsealed springs
Where Science bedews his Dædal wings.

Years after years,
Through blood, and tears,
And a thick hell of hatreds, and hopes, and fears;
We waded and flew,
And the islets were few
Where the bud-blighted flowers of happiness grew.

Our feet now, every palm,
Are sandalled with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm;
And, beyond our eyes,
The human love lies
Which makes all it gazes on Paradise.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS AND HOURS.

Then weave the web of the mystic measure;
From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth,
Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure,
Fill the dance and the music of mirth,
As the waves of a thousand streams rush by
To an ocean of splendour and harmony!

CHORUS OF SPIRITS OF THE MIND.

Our spoil is won,
Our task is done,
We are free to dive, or soar, or run;
Beyond and around,
Or within the bound
Which clips the world with darkness round,

We'll pass the eyes
Of the starry skies
Into the hoar deep to colonize:
Death, Chaos, and Night,
From the sound of our flight,
Shall flee, like mist from a tempest's might.

And Earth, Air, and Light,
And the Spirit of Might,
Which drives round the stars in their fiery flight;
And Love, Thought, and Breath,
The powers that quell Death,
Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield:

We will take our plan
From the new world of man,
And our work shall be called the Promethean.

CHORUS OF HOURS.

Break the dance, and scatter the song;
Let some depart, and some remain.

SEMICHORUS I.

We, beyond heaven, are driven along:

SEMICHORUS II.

Us the enchantments of earth retain:

SEMICHORUS I.

Ceaseless, and rapid, and fierce, and free,
With the Spirits which build a new earth and sea,
And a heaven where yet heaven could never be.

SEMICHORUS II.

Solemn, and slow, and serene, and bright,
Leading the Day and outspeeding the Night,
With the powers of a world of perfect light.

SEMICHORUS I

We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,
Till the trees, and the beasts, and the clouds appear
From its chaos made calm by love, not fear.

SEMICHORUS II.

We encircle the ocean and mountains of earth,
And the happy forms of its death and birth
Change to the music of our sweet mirth.

CHORUS OF HOURS AND SPIRITS.

Break the dance, and scatter the song,
  Let some depart, and some remain,
Wherever we fly we lead along
In leashes, like starbeams, soft yet strong,
  The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain.

PANTHEA.

Ha! they are gone!

IONE.

Yet feel you no delight
From the past sweetness?

PANTHEA.

As the bare green hill
When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,
Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
To the unpavilioned sky!

IONE.

Even whilst we speak
New notes arise. What is that awful sound?

PANTHEA.

'Tis the deep music of the rolling world
Kindling within the strings of the waved air,
Æolian modulations.

IONE.

Listen too,
How every pause is filled with under-notes,
Clear, silver, icy, keen awakening tones,

Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,
As the sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air
And gaze upon themselves within the sea.

PANTHEA.

But see where through two openings in the forest
Which hanging branches overcanopy,
And where two runnels of a rivulet,
Between the close moss violet-inwoven,
Have made their path of melody, like sisters
Who part with sighs that they may meet in smiles,
Turning their dear disunion to an isle
Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet sad thoughts;
Two visions of strange radiance float upon
The ocean-like enchantment of strong sound,
Which flows intenser, keener, deeper yet,
Under the ground and through the windless air.

IONE.

I see a chariot like that thinnest boat,
In which the mother of the months is borne
By ebbing night into her western cave,
When she upsprings from interlunar dreams,
O'er which is curved an orblike canopy
Of gentle darkness, and the hills and woods
Distinctly seen through that dusk airy veil,
Regard like shapes in an enchanter's glass;
Its wheels are solid clouds, azure and gold,
Such as the genii of the thunder-storm
Pile on the floor of the illumined sea
When the sun rushes under it; they roll

And move and grow as with an inward wind;
Within it sits a wingèd infant, white
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow,
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,
Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing folds
Of its white robe, woof of ætherial pearl.
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
Scattered in strings; yet its two eyes are heavens
Of liquid darkness, which the Deity
Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured
From jaggèd clouds, out of their arrowy lashes,
Tempering the cold and radiant air around,
With fire that is not brightness; in its hand
It sways a quivering moon-beam, from whose point
A guiding power directs the chariot's prow
Over its wheelèd clouds, which as they roll
Over the grass, and flowers, and waves, wake sounds,
Sweet as a singing rain of silver dew.

PANTHEA.

And from the other opening in the wood
Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,
A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres,
Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass
Flow, as through empty space, music and light:
Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,
Purple and azure, white, green, and golden,
Sphere within sphere; and every space between
Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep,
Yet each inter-transpicuous, and they whirl

Over each other with a thousand motions,
Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning,
And with the force of self-destroying swiftness,
Intensely, slowly, solemnly roll on.
Kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones,
Intelligible words and music wild.
With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb
Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist
Of elemental subtlety, like light;
And the wild odour of the forest flowers,
The music of the living grass and air,
The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams
Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed,
Seem kneaded into one aerial mass
Which drowns the sense. Within the orb itself,
Pillowed upon its alabaster arms,
Like to a child o'erwearied with sweet toil,
On its own folded wings and wavy hair,
The Spirit of the Earth is laid asleep,
And you can see its little lips are moving,
Amid the changing light of their own smiles,
Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.

IONE.

'Tis only mocking the orb's harmony.

PANTHEA.

And from a star upon its forehead, shoot,
Like swords of azure fire, or golden spears
With tyrant-quelling myrtle overtwined,
Embleming heaven and earth united now,

Vast beams like spokes of some invisible wheel
Which whirl as the orb whirls, swifter than thou
Filling the abyss with sun-like lightnings,
And perpendicular now, and now transverse,
Pierce the dark soil, and as they pierce and pa
Make bare the secrets of the earth's deep heart
Infinite mine of adamant and gold,
Valueless stones and unimagined gems,
And caverns on crystàlline columns poised
With vegetable silver overspread;
Wells of unfathomed fire, and water-springs
Whence the great sea, even as a child is fed,
Whose vapours clothe earth's monarch mountai
With kingly, ermine snow. The beams flash o
And make appear the melancholy ruins
Of cancelled cycles; anchors, beaks of ships;
Planks turned to marble; quivers, helms, and s
And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels
Of scythèd chariots, and the emblazonry
Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,
Round which Death laughed, sepulchred emble
Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin!
The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
Whose population which the earth grew over
Was mortal, but not human; see, they lie,
Their monstrous works and uncouth skeletons,
Their statues, homes and fanes; prodigious sha
Huddled in grey annihilation, split,
Jammed in the hard, black deep; and over thes
The anatomies of unknown wingèd things,
And fishes which were isles of living scale,

And serpents, bony chains, twisted around
The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
Had crushed the iron crags; and over these
The jaggèd alligator, and the might
Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once
Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores,
And weed-overgrown continents of earth,
Increased and multiplied like summer worms
On an abandoned corpse, till the blue globe
Wrapt deluge round it like a cloke, and they
Yelled, gasped, and were abolished; or some God
Whose throne was in a comet, past, and cried,
Be not! And like my words they were no more.

THE EARTH.

The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,
The vaporous exultation not to be confined!
Ha! ha! the animation of delight
Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,
And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind.

THE MOON.

Brother mine, calm wanderer,
Happy globe of land and air,
Some Spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
Which penetrates my frozen frame,
And passes with the warmth of flame,
With love, and odour, and deep melody
Through me, through me!

THE EARTH.

Ha! ha! the caverns of my hollow mountains,
My cloven fire-crags, sound-exulting fountains
Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter.
The oceans, and the desarts, and the abysses,
And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,
Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing after.

They cry aloud as I do. Sceptred curse,
Who all our green and azure universe
Threatenedst to muffle round with black destruction, sending
A solid cloud to rain hot thunder-stones,
And splinter and knead down my children's bones,
All I bring forth, to one void mass battering and blending —

Until each crag-like tower, and storied column,
Palace, and obelisk, and temple solemn,
My imperial mountains crowned with cloud, and snow, and fire;
My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom
Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,
Were stamped by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire —

How art thou sunk, withdrawn, covered, drunk up
By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup
Drained by a desart-troop, a little drop for all;
And from beneath, around, within, above,
Filling thy void annihilation, love
Burst in like light on caves cloven by the thunder-ball.

THE MOON.

The snow upon my lifeless mountains
Is loosened into living fountains,
My solid oceans flow, and sing, and shine:
A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
It clothes with unexpected birth
My cold bare bosom: Oh! it must be thine
On mine, on mine!

Gazing on thee, I feel, I know
Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
And living shapes upon my bosom move:
Music is in the sea and air,
Wingèd clouds soar here and there,
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of:
'Tis love, all love!

THE EARTH.

It interpenetrates my granite mass,
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass,
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers,
Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers.

And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being
With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever,
Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows, fleeing,

Leave Man, who was a many sided mirror,
Which could distort to many a shade of error,
This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love;
Which over all his kind as the sun's heaven
Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even
Darting from starry depths radiance and life, doth move,

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left,
Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs is poured;
Then when it wanders home with rosy smile,
Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
It is a spirit, then, weeps on her child restored.

Man, oh, not men! a chain of linkèd thought,
Of love and might to be divided not,
Compelling the elements with adamantine stress;
As the Sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
The unquiet republic of the maze
Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
Whose nature is its own divine control,
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;
Familiar acts are beautiful through love;
Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they could be!

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,

A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
Is as a tempest-wingèd ship, whose helm
Love rules through waves which dare not overwhelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold mass
Of marble and of colour his dreams pass;
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their children wear;
Language is a perpetual orphic song,
Which rules with Dædal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were.

The lightning is his slave; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on!
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air,
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me; I have none.

THE MOON.

The shadow of white death has past
From my path in heaven at last,
A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep;
And through my newly-woven bowers,
Wander happy paramours,
Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
Thy vales more deep.

THE EARTH.

As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
A half unfrozen dew-globe, green, and gold,
And crystalline, till it becomes a wingèd mist,
And wanders up the vault of the blue day,
Outlives the noon, and on the sun's last ray
Hangs o'er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst.

THE MOON.

Thou art folded, thou art lying
In the light which is undying
Of thine own joy, and heaven's smile divine;
All suns and constellations shower
On thee a light, a life, a power
Which doth array thy sphere; thou pourest thine
On mine, on mine!

THE EARTH.

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
Which points into the heavens dreaming delight,
Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep;
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth keep.

THE MOON.

As in the soft and sweet eclipse,
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull;

So when thy shadow falls on me,
Then am I mute and still, by thee
Covered; of thy love, Orb most beautiful,
Full, oh, too full!

Thou art speeding round the sun,
Brightest world of many a one;
Green and azure sphere which shinest
With a light which is divinest
Among all the lamps of Heaven
To whom life and light is given;
I, thy crystal paramour
Borne beside thee by a power
Like the polar Paradise,
Magnet-like, of lovers' eyes;
I, a most enamoured maiden
Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love,
Maniac-like around thee move
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side
Like a Mænad, round the cup
Which Agave lifted up
In the weird Cadmæan forest.
Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest
I must hurry, whirl and follow
Through the heavens wide and hollow
Sheltered by the warm embrace
Of thy soul from hungry space,
Drinking from thy sense and sight
Beauty, majesty, and might,

As a lover or a cameleon
Grows like what it looks upon,
As a violet's gentle eye
Gazes on the azure sky
Until its hue grows like what it beholds,
As a grey and watery mist
Glows like solid amethyst
Athwart the western mountain it enfolds,
When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow.

THE EARTH.

And the weak day weeps
That it should be so.
Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
Falls on me like the clear and tender light
Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night
Through isles for ever calm;
Oh, gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
The caverns of my pride's deep universe,
Charming the tiger joy, whose tramplings fierce
Made wounds which need thy balm.

PANTHEA.

I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,
A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,
Out of the stream of sound.

IONE.

Ah me! sweet sister,
The stream of sound has ebbed away from us.

And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
Because your words fall like the clear, soft dew
Shaken from a bathing wood-nymph's limbs and hair.

PANTHEA.

Peace! peace! A mighty Power which is as darkness,
Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky
Is showered like night, and from within the air
Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up
Into the pores of sunlight: the bright visions,
Wherein the singing spirits rode and shone,
Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.

IONE.

There is a sense of words upon mine ear.

PANTHEA.

An universal sound like words: Oh, list!

DEMOGORGON.

Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,
  Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies,
Beautiful orb! gathering as thou dost roll
  The love which paves thy path along the skies:

THE EARTH.

I hear: I am as a drop of dew that dies.

DEMOGORGON.

Thou, Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth
  With wonder, as it gazes upon thee

Whilst each to men, and beasts, and the swift birth
Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony:

THE MOON.

I hear: I am a leaf shaken by thee!

DEMOGORGON.

Ye kings of suns and stars, Dæmons and Gods,
Ætherеal Dominations, who possess
Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes
Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness:

A VOICE *from above.*

Our great Republic hears, we are blest, and bless.

DEMOGORGON.

Ye happy dead, whose beams of brightest verse
Are clouds to hide, not colours to pourtray,
Whether your nature is that universe
Which once ye saw and suffered —

A VOICE *from beneath.*

Or as they
Whom we have left, we change and pass away.

DEMOGORGON.

Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
From man's high mind even to the central stone
Of sullen lead; from Heaven's star-fretted domes
To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on:

A CONFUSED VOICE.

We hear: thy words waken Oblivion.

DEMOGORGON.

Spirits, whose homes are flesh [illegible]
Ye worms, and fish, ye living [illegible]
Lightning and wind, and ye [illegible]
Meteors and mists, which [illegible]

A VOICE.

Thy voice to us is wind among [illegible]

DEMOGORGON.

Man, who wert once a [illegible]
A dupe and a deceiver [illegible]
A traveller from the cradle [illegible]
Through the dim [illegible]

[illegible]

Speak thy strong [illegible]

DEMOGORGON.

This is the day, which [illegible]
At the Earth-born's spell [illegible]

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
  Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
  The serpent that would clasp her with his length;
These are the spells by which to re-assume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
  To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
  Neither to change, nor faulter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

tial division is signalled by the great choral passages. The modernness of Shelley's drama is however evident in the more subtle and free interfusion of lyric with recitative, and the far greater elaboration of the personages and function of the chorus. In Æschylus, the Chorus is a band of Sea-nymphs, who wing their way upward from the ocean to console Prometheus, and settle at the rock at his feet (lines 128–135; 277–282). In Shelley, the chief characters who sustain the Chorus are also Sea-nymphs,—Ione and Panthea, who, like the nymphs of Æschylus, sit with drooping wings on the cliff below Prometheus, and cheer him with their sympathy. But with the songs of these Daughters of Ocean are blended the voices of the whole creation,—Spirits of Nature, of the Human Mind, of unguessed Powers of Evil,—who fill with music every pause in the drama. Moreover, in Shelley the Chorus-characters are far more closely interwoven with the structure of the drama than in Æschylus. The chorus of the Prometheus Bound holds the simple position of the observer, and its function is to express emotional sympathy: the chorus-voices of the Prometheus Unbound again and again further the action.

Indeed, the structure of the modern drama is at every point both more complex and more organic than that of the Greek drama. There are more leading characters, and their relation to each other is less purely incidental. Æschylus suggests indeed a fine character-contrast between Prometheus and Io: the Titan suffering from the hate of Zeus, the woman from his love, the Titan an image of proud and still stoicism, the woman of restless and uncontrolled passion. But, as far as the story is concerned, Prometheus and Io are bound together simply by the mechanical tie of

common suffering, and by the prophecy of the age to come, when Herakles, the descendant of Io, shall release the Titan. Prometheus and Asia are far more deeply united. Their relation is an essential fact in the drama, and their destinies are one, alike in the external and in the spiritual narrative. The subordinate characters also all play a necessary part in the action This closer structural unity of Shelley's drama is entirely modern.

The conception of the central character, again, differs widely in the two dramas. The Prometheus of Æschylus is by no means an ideal hero, even to us, who have with the Rebel an instinctive sympathy greater than the Greek would have dared to acknowledge. He is fiery, untamed, revengeful, answering taunt with taunt In the Prometheus of Shelley, all that can lessen our sympathy is removed. The strength remains, but the bitterness has vanished, merged in an all-embracing pity. The Titan of Æschylus exclaims —

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

L. 975 ἁπλῷ λόγῳ τοὺς πάντας ἐχθαίρω θεοὺς,
ὅσοι παθόντες εὖ κακοῦοί μ' ἐκδίκως.

ΕΡΜΗΣ

κλύω σ' ἐγὼ μεμηνότ' οὐ σμικρὰν νόσον [1]

---

[1] PROMETHEUS

I tell thee, I loathe the universal gods,
Who for the good I gave them rendered back
The ill of their injustice

HERMES

Thou art mad —
I hear thee raving, Titan, at the fever-height.

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ.

νοσοῖμ' ἄν, εἰ νόσημα τοὺς ἐχθροὺς στυγεῖν.

Shelley's Prometheus no longer "loathes the universal gods." He says: —

I hate no more
As then, ere misery made me wise.

Yet, in spite of this new magnanimity, the Titan of Shelley has fully as much of fine scorn and legitimate defiance as the Titan of Æschylus. Compare Shelley, I. 401–406, with Æschylus, 937–940.

Let others flatter Crime, where it sits throned
In brief omnipotence: — secure are they, . . .
I wait,
Enduring thus, the retributive hour,
Which, since we spake is even nearer now.

σέβου, προσεύχου, θῶπτε τὸν κρατοῦντ' ἀεί.
ἐμοὶ δ' ἔλασσον Ζηνὸς ἢ μηδὲν μέλει
δράτω, κρατείτω τόνδε τὸν βραχὺν χρόνον
ὅπως θέλει· δαρὸν γὰρ οὐκ ἄρξει θεοῖς.[1]

We may, if we like, conceive the hero of the later drama to be the same as the hero of the earlier, disciplined by

---

PROMETHEUS.
If it be madness to abhor my foes,
May I be mad!

[1] Reverence thou,
Adore thou, flatter thou, whomever reigns,
Whenever reigning — but for me, your Zeus
Is less than nothing! Let him act and reign
His brief hour out, according to his will —
He will not, therefore, rule the gods too long!

central fact of the Prometheus Bound, as of eve drama, is Ἀνάγκη — Necessity.

L. 105. τὸ τῆς ἀνάγκης ἔστ' ἀδήριτον σθένος.

In spite of the intellectual fatalism of Shelley, th thought of the English drama is freedom, — man over his own destiny. Finally, the whole spiritual i clearer in Shelley's mind than in the mind of . We instinctively feel, in the Prometheus Bound, e the poet conceals from his hearers an esoteric tru he dares to suggest by dark hints only, or else t himself held in the grasp of a conception greate fully understands. In Shelley, the rebellious not wise suppressed. We feel him to be in full posses own thought, and if the thought is obscure to us does not lie with the poet.

The direct comparisons between the two dr naturally confined in the main to the first act c as this is the only part which repeats in any degre uation of Æschylus. The scene here is much the the high mountain-wall, the nailed Titan, the oce below. We know how profoundly Shelley's imagi affected by the setting of the Prometheus Bound ; also that shortly before writing his own drama he travelling among the finest scenery of the Alps and ern Italy. He writes, in his journal, March 26, "After dinner we ascended Les Échelles, windin road cut through perpendicular rocks, of immense . . . The rocks, which cannot be less than a tho in perpendicular height, sometimes overhang the each side, and almost shut out the sky. The sc

that described in the Prometheus of Æschylus: — vast rifts and caverns in the granite precipices; wintry mountains with ice and snow above; the loud sounds of unseen waters within the caverns, and walls of toppling rocks, only to be scaled as he describes, by the winged chariot of the ocean nymphs." Reminiscences of the Alps and of Æschylus meet in the scenery of the Prometheus Unbound.

The passive elements introduced in the description of the scene are the same, — the vast height, the remoteness and desolation Compare with Shelley, I. 1–23.

L. 1. χθονὸς μὲν εἰς τηλουρὸν ἥκομεν πέδον
Σκύθην ἐς οἶμον, ἄβατον εἰς ἐρημίαν.[1]

L. 20. . . . ἀπανθρώπῳ πάγῳ
ἵν' οὔτε φωνὴν οὔτε του μορφὴν βροτῶν
ὄψει.[2]

L. 270 . . ἐρήμου τοῦδ' ἀγείτονος πάγου.[3]

L. 141. . . . προσπορπατὸς
τῆσδε φάραγγος σκοπέλοις ἐν ἄκροις
φρουρὰν ἄζηλον ὀχήσω.[4]

---

[1] We reach the utmost limit of the earth,
The Scythian track, the desert without man.

[2] . . . this rocky height unclomb by man,
Where never human voice nor face shall find
Out thee who lov'st them!

[3] Doomed to this drear hill, and no neighboring
Of any life

[4] Transfixed with the fang
Of a fetter, I hang
On the high-jutting rocks of this fissure, and keep
An uncoveted watch o'er the world and the deep.

L. 157. *νῦν δ' αἰθέριον κίνυγμ' ὁ τάλας*
ἐχθροῖς ἐπίχαρτα πέπονθα.[1]

L. 113. *ὑπαίθριος δεσμοῖσι πασσαλευτὸς ὤν.*[2]

L. 269. . . . *πρὸς πέτραις πεδαρσίοις.*[3]

See also lines four and five.

L. 15. . . . *φάραγγι πρὸς δυσχειμέρῳ.*[4]

L. 562. . . . *χαλινοῖς ἐν πετρίνοισιν*
χειμαζόμενον.[5]

L. 22. . . . *σταθευτὸς δ' ἡλίου φοίβῃ φλογί*
χροιᾶς ἀμείψεις ἄνθος.[6]

Compare Shelley I. 383–5 : —

. . . whether the Sun
Split my parched skin, or in the moony night
The crystal-wingèd snow cling round my hair.

Shelley's "crystal-wingèd" snow finds exact parallel in Æschylus' "λευκοπτερῳ νιφάδι" (993).

---

[1] But now the winds sing through and shake
The hurtling chains wherein I hang, —
And I, in my naked sorrows, make
Much mirth for my enemy.

[2] Hung here in fetters, 'neath the blanching sky!

[3] . . . against such skiey rocks.

[4] . . . up this storm-rent chasm.

[5] And who is he that writhes, I see,
In the rock-hung chain?

[6] . . . thy beauty's flower,
Scorched in the sun's clear heat, shall fade away.

It is, however, noticeable, that in Shelley we find constant references to the snow, — avalanches, icy peaks glittering in the sunlight, etc, and that such references are with one or two exceptions unknown in Æschylus. The difference is probably due to the different character of the scenery in Switzerland and in Greece. It may be suggested in passing that if the student wishes to feel the absence of color in Greek poetry, he cannot do better than to turn from the Prometheus of Æschylus to the Prometheus of Shelley.

The active elements in the setting are often the same, — the earthquake, the vulture, the wind and whirlwind (Shelley, I. 34–44, Æschylus, 1016–1025, 1085–1089). Sometimes the English here seems like a mere transcription of the Greek, Shelley would hardly have called the vulture "wingèd hound," had not Æschylus used the expression πτηνὸς κύων. There are one or two other descriptive passages in the poem in which the Greek is very closely followed. Compare Æschylus,

L. 23 . . ἀσμένῳ δέ σοι
ἡ ποικιλείμων νὺξ ἀποκρύψει φάος
πάχνην θ' ἑῴαν ἥλιος σκεδᾷ πάλιν,[1]

with Shelley,

Act I, L. 44 And yet to me welcome is day and night
Whether one breaks the hoar frost of the morn,
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-coloured east,

---

1 Night shall come up with garniture of stars
To comfort thee with shadow, and the sun
Disperse with retrickt beams the morning-frosts.

also Æschylus,

L. 1043. *πρὸς ταῦτ' ἐπ' ἐμοὶ ῥιπτέσθω μὲν*
πυρὸς ἀμφήκης βόστρυχος, αἰθὴρ δ'
ἐρεθιζέσθω
βροντῇ σφακέλῳ τ' ἀγρίων ἀνέμων·
χθόνα δ' ἐκ πυθμένων αὐταῖς ῥίζαις
πνεῦμα κραδαίνοι,
κῦμα δὲ πόντου τραχεῖ ῥοθίῳ
ξυγχώσειεν τῶν τ' οὐρανίων
ἄστρων διόδους, . . .[1]

with Shelley,

Act I., l. 165. . . . the sea
Was lifted by strange tempest, and new fire
From earthquake-rifted mountains of bright snow
Shook its portentous hair beneath Heaven's frown;
Lightning and Inundation vexed the plains.

In spite of these close parallelisms, the difference in the treatment of the scene is very marked in the two dramas. The modern attitude towards nature is evident in Shelley, both in the greater fulness and detail of treatment and in the greater spirituality of conception. The austere and bleak simplicity of Æschylus is as effective in its way as the brilliant word-painting of Shelley; yet the modern poet

---

[1] Let the locks of the lightning, all bristling and whitening,
Flash, coiling me round!
While the æther goes surging 'neath thunder and scourging
Of wild winds unbound!
Let the blast of the firmament whirl from its place
The earth rooted below,
And the brine of the ocean in rapid emotion,
Be it driven in the face
Of the stars up in heaven, as they walk to and fro!

gives us some details which we could ill afford to miss, as where the plain iron chains of the Greek are transformed into vast and glittering glaciers, which bind the Titan to the rock. But it is noticeable that although the physical setting is elaborated by Shelley, it is on the whole less emphasized than in Æschylus. Shelley passes the different elements of the physical torture in rapid summary in the first monologue, and then escapes, for the remainder of the act, into the region of purely spiritual pain. We feel indeed that through every line spoken by the Titan of Æschylus there breathes the pain of rebellion, the primary and simple passion of angry pride, but no passage is found remotely suggestive of such complex and exalted sources of suffering as are opened to Prometheus by Shelley's Furies, and hardly any causes of inward pain are directly stated, though the "scorn" and "despair" of Shelley are faintly suggested in such passages of Æschylus as 98–114, 544–551, 152–159. The climax of agony in the Greek is the outburst of the rage of the elements at the very end of the drama. The Greek drama, as compared with the English, is certainly external.

Turning away from the general consideration of the scene to the closer search for parallel passages in the dramatic development, we find at once that the opening invocation of Shelley is almost a direct translation from the Greek. Compare Shelley, I 25–29,

> "I ask the Earth, have not the Mountains felt?
> I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
> Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
> Heaven's ever-changing shadow, spread below,
> Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
> Ah me, alas, pain, pain ever, for ever"

with Æschylus,

L. 88. ὦ δῖος αἰθὴρ καὶ ταχύπτεροι πνοαὶ
ποταμῶν τε πηγαί, ποντίων τε κυμάτων
ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα, παμμῆτόρ τε γῆ,
καὶ τὸν πανόπτην κύκλον ἡλίου καλῶ·
ἴδεσθέ μ' οἷα πρὸς θεῶν πάσχω θεός.
* * * * * *
φεῦ φεῦ, τὸ παρὸν τό τ' ἐπερχόμενον
πῆμα στενάχω, . . .[1]

This is the "large invocation" which, as Lanier says, "seems still to assault our physical ears, across the twenty odd centuries."

No other broad parallel occurs till we reach the Curse uttered by the Phantasm of Jupiter. There is no one passage in Æschylus corresponding to this Curse, nor is there the same stern assertion that evil is of necessity self-doomed; but, in several great passages, we have the spirit of parts of the Curse perfectly reproduced. With the first stanza, and part of the second, compare lines 989–996.

οὐκ ἔστιν αἴκισμ' οὐδὲ μηχάνημ', ὅτῳ
προτρέψεταί με Ζεὺς γεγωνῆσαι τάδε,[2]

---

[1] O holy Æther, and swift wingèd Winds,
And River-wells, and laughter innumerous
Of yon sea-waves! Earth, mother of us all,
And all-viewing cyclic Sun, I cry on you!—
Behold me a god, what I endure from gods!
* * * * * *
Woe, woe! to-day's woe and the coming morrow's,
I cover with one groan.

[2] No torture from his hand,
Nor any machination in the world

πρὶν ἂν χαλασθῇ δεσμὰ λυμαντήρια.
πρὸς ταῦτα ῥιπτέσθω μὲν αἰθαλοῦσσα φλόξ,
λευκοπτέρῳ δὲ νιφάδι καὶ βροντήμασι
χθονίοις κυκάτω πάντα καὶ ταρασσέτω·
γνάμψει γὰρ οὐδὲν τῶνδέ μ' ὥστε καὶ φράσαι
πρὸς οὗ χρεών νιν ἐκπεσεῖν τυραννίδος.

This imprecation finds sublime fulfilment in the great closing passage, 1080–1093

καὶ μὴν ἔργῳ κοὐκ ἔτι μύθῳ
χθὼν σεσάλευται·
βρυχία δ' ἠχὼ παραμυκᾶται
βροντῆς, ἕλικες δ' ἐκλάμπουσι
στεροπῆς ζάπυροι,
στρόμβοι δὲ κόνιν εἱλίσσουσι·
σκιρτᾷ δ' ἀνέμων πνεύματα πάντων
εἰς ἄλληλα
στάσιν ἀντίπνουν ἀποδεικνύμενα [1]

Shall force mine utterance, ere he loose, himself,
These cankerous fetters from me! For the rest,
Let him now hurl his blanching lightnings down,
And with his white-winged snows, and mutterings deep
Of subterranean thunders, mix all things,
Confound them in disorder! None of this
Shall bend my sturdy will, and make me speak
The name of his dethroner who shall come

The name of his dethroner who shall come

[1] Ay! in act, now — in word, now, no more!
Earth is rocking in space!
And the thunders crash up with a roar upon roar,
And the eddying lightnings flash fire in my face,
And the whirlwinds are whirling the dust round and round
And the blasts of the winds universal, leap free
And blow each upon each, with a passion of sound

ξυντετάρακται δ' αἰθὴρ πόντῳ.
τοιάδ' ἐπ' ἐμοὶ ῥιπὴ διόθεν
τεύχουσα φόβον στείχει φανερῶς.
ὦ μητρὸς ἐμῆς σέβας, ὦ πάντων
αἰθὴρ κοινὸν φάος εἱλίσσων,
ἐσορᾷς μ' ὡς ἔκδικα πάσχω.

The "manifest dread," — τεύχουσα φόβον, — like the "frenzying fear" in Shelley, is a note seldom struck by the brave Titan.

The last stanza of the Curse has a fine parallel in lines 915–919 of Æschylus, describing the Fall of Jupiter.

Act I., L. 296–301.

An awful image of calm power,
Though now thou sittest, let the hour
Come, when thou must appear to be
That which thou art, internally,
And after many a false and fruitless crime,
Scorn track thy lagging fall thro' boundless space and time.

L. 915. . . . πρὸς ταῦτα νῦν
θαρσῶν καθήσθω τοῖς πεδαρσίοις κτύποις
πιστὸς, τινάσσων χερσὶ πυρπνόον βέλος.[1]

And æther goes mingling in storm with the sea!
Such a curse on my head, with a manifest dread,
From the hand of your Zeus has been hurtled along!
O my mother's fair glory! O, Æther, enringing
All eyes, with the sweet common light of thy bringing,
Dost thou see how I suffer this wrong?

[1] Now, therefore, let him sit
And brave the imminent doom, and fix his faith
On his supernal noises, hurtling on
With restless hand, the bolt that breathes out fire.

οὐδὲν γὰρ αὐτῷ ταῦτ' ἐπαρκέσει τὸ μὴ οὐ
πεσεῖν ἀτίμως πτώματ' οὐκ ἀνασχετά.

The closest parallelism in situation in the dramas is found in the colloquy which each contains between Hermes and Prometheus. In each, Hermes is sent from Zeus to extort the Secret known to the Titan, or to inflict fresh tortures; in each, he is treated with scorn and his offers ignominiously thrown back. The form of this discussion more nearly approaches the form of the Greek drama than does anything else in Shelley, the two speakers answering each the other in brief sententious phrases. This sharp repartee is a favorite form in Greek drama: it is quite out of Shelley's usual line, yet he here uses it with great force and effect. One or two passages in the dialogue are similar rather in thought than in form.—

Act I., l. 429 Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene,
As light in the sun, throned

L. 966. τῆς σῆς λατρείας τὴν ἐμὴν δυσπραξίαν,
σαφῶς ἐπίστασ', οὐκ ἂν ἀλλάξαιμ' ἐγώ.
κρεῖσσον γὰρ οἶμαι τῇδε λατρεύειν πέτρᾳ
ἢ πατρὶ φῦναι Ζηνὶ πιστὸν ἄγγελον [1]

Yet the spirit of the two scenes is on the whole widely different. The Mercury of Shelley is well-disposed towards

---

For these things shall not help him, none of them,
Nor hinder his perdition when he falls
To shame, and lower than patience

[1] I would not barter — learn thou soothly that! —
My suffering for thy service. I maintain
It is a nobler thing to serve these rocks
Than live a faithful slave to father Zeus.

Prometheus, and regretful and courteous in address; the Hermes of Æschylus is a flippant and cruel young God. The part played by Shelley's Mercury is much more nearly approached by Oceanus in the Greek drama who tempts the Titan by seeming friendliness, while yet he is too weak courageously to take his part. Hephæstus, again, mourns, like Mercury, that it falls to his share to inflict suffering on Prometheus. Compare Shelley,

Act I., L. 352. . . . Awful Sufferer,
To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
I come, by the great Father's will driven down,
To execute a doom of new revenge.
Alas! I pity thee, and hate myself
That I can do no more,

with Æschylus,

L. 14. ἐγὼ δ' ἄτολμός εἰμι συγγενῆ θεὸν
δῆσαι βίᾳ φάραγγι πρὸς δυσχειμέρῳ.
πάντως δ' ἀνάγκη τῶνδέ μοι τόλμαν σχεθεῖν
ἐξωριάζειν γὰρ πατρὸς λόγους βαρύ.
τῆς ὀρθοβούλου Θέμιδος αἰπυμῆτα παῖ,
ἄκοντά σ' ἄκων δυσλύτοις χαλκεύμασι
προσπασσαλεύσω . . .[1]

and with a later exclamation of Hephæstus as he still hesitates before his cruel task,

L. 45. ὦ πολλὰ μισηθεῖσα χειρωναξία.

---

[1] I lack your daring, up this storm-rent chasm
To fix with violent hands a kindred god,
Howbeit necessity compels me so
That I must dare it,—and our Zeus commands
With a most inevitable word. Ho, thou!
High-thoughted son of Themis who is sage,
Thee loth, I loth must rivet fast in chains.

As he completes that task and gazes upon the Sufferer's form, Hephæstus cries to Kratos: —

L. 69. ὁρᾷς θέαμα δυσθέατον ὄμμασιν.[1]

It is with like horror and pity that Mercury describes his haunting memory of that vison.

L. 357
. . aye from thy sight
Returning, for a season, Heaven seems Hell,
So thy worn form pursues me night and day,
Smiling reproach

The stern lines of dialogue (I. 411–416), which declare that the "years to come of pain" are limited only by "the period of Jove's power," but that this end of tyranny "must come," suggest passages of similar form and content in Æschylus, 755–770, 507–520 Thus —

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

L. 755 νῦν δ' οὐδέν ἐστι τέρμα μοι προκείμενον
μόχθων, πρὶν ἂν Ζεὺς ἐκπέσῃ τυραννίδος.

ΙΩ

ἦ γάρ ποτ' ἐστὶν ἐκπεσεῖν ἀρχῆς Δία;[2]
* * * * * *

[1] Thou dost behold a spectacle that turns
The sight o' the eyes to pity

[2] PROMETHEUS
. but I before me see
In all my far prevision, not a bound
To all I suffer, ere that Zeus shall fall
From being a king

IO.
And can it ever be
That Zeus shall fall from empire?
* * * * * *

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ.

ὡς τοίνυν ὄντων τῶνδέ σοι μαθεῖν πάρα.

While already, in solemn words which "half reveal and half conceal" the mysterious decree of Fate, Prometheus has made known to the Chorus that even Zeus shall bend to Necessity.

ΧΟΡΟΣ.

L. 515. τίς οὖν ἀνάγκης ἐστὶν οἰακοστρόφος;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ.

μοῖραι τρίμορφοι, μνήμονές τ' Ἐρινύες.

ΧΟΡΟΣ.

τούτων ἄρα Ζεύς ἐστιν ἀσθενέστερος.

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ.

οὔκουν ἂν ἐκφύγοι γε τὴν πεπρωμένην.

ΧΟΡΟΣ.

τί γὰρ πέπρωται Ζηνὶ, πλὴν ἀεὶ κρατεῖν;[1]

PROMETHEUS.

Learn from me, therefore, that the event shall be.

[1] CHORUS.

Who holds the helm of that Necessity?

PROMETHEUS.

The threefold Fates, and the unforgetting Furies.

CHORUS.

Is Zeus less absolute than these are?

PROMETHEUS.

Yea,
And therefore cannot fly what is ordained.

CHORUS.

What is ordained for Zeus, except to be
A king for ever?

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ.

τοῦτ' οὐκ ἔτ' ἂν πίθοιο, μηδὲ λιπάρει.

With the coming of the Furies, we enter another set of associations. There is nothing like this in the Prometheus Bound but in two other plays of Æschylus — the Choephoræ and the Eumenides — we have a suggestive and horrible picture of these "hounds of Hell." It is evident that Shelley must have been thoroughly familiar with the Greek conception of the Erinyes. His Furies, like those of Æschylus, are sable-stoled daughters of Night; they rise from Hell in evil throngs, their locks are snaky, they track their victim like hounds, they feel fierce joy in the pursuit. The picture, in the Eumenides, of Apollo, young, grave, gracious, sternly reproaching the hideous forms and protecting his suppliant Orestes, suggests at once Shelley's Mercury, the fair god, as he holds back the forms of darkness and forces them to crouch in silence at his bidding. The transition from the Chorus of Furies to the Chorus of healing Spirits, at the end of the first act of the Prometheus Unbound, is no more marked than the transition in the Eumenides when the Furies appear as protecting divinities of Athens, and their hymns to Athens and to Freedom relieve the horror of the drama. Yet the contrast between the workings of the Greek imagination and the English could not be more sharply marked than by comparing the Furies of Æschylus with those of Shelley, — the "troop of hideous women," sexless, gross, physical, who lie in disgusting sleep in the temple

PROMETHEUS. [illegible]

[illegible]

of Apollo, with the shadowy forms of spiritual evil, who sweep upward from the horizon,

> Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
> And hollow underneath, like death.

Æschylus leaves nothing to the imagination; Shelley leaves all but everything.

The only other part of the Prometheus Unbound where Shelley has obviously and consciously followed Æschylus is in the long passage of the second act where Asia describes to Demogorgon the service which Prometheus has rendered to man. Compare Shelley, II. iv. 32–99, with Æschylus, 196–254, 442–471, 476–506. This enumeration of benefits bestowed comes more gracefully from the lips of Asia than from those of the Titan himself; but Shelley has followed Æschylus very closely. Prometheus has given men fire, has taught them to build, in Æschylus houses, in Shelley cities, to sail the ocean in "wingèd chariots," and to discover the mineral treasures of the earth. He has trained them in medicine, in astronomy, in the knowledge of science, letters, and art, though by Æschylus the last gift is only hinted in the gift of Memory, the "sweet Muse-mother." Shelley omits the Æschylean passage concerning the reading of omens. The modern and ancient poets unite in assigning to Prometheus the glory of awakening Hopes within the human breast; but in Æschylus the Hopes are blind, while in Shelley they

> hide with thin and rainbow wings
> The Shape of Death.

Finally, Shelley adds to hope, Love — a gift unmentioned

by the Greek. The two passages should be carefully compared.

These are perhaps all the points worth mentioning in which Shelley shows direct and conscious recollection of the Prometheus Bound. But this enumeration by no means exhausts the influence of the Greek drama upon the English. For when one mighty imagination comes within the sphere of another, countless unconscious influences pass from spirit to spirit. The temper and style of the Prometheus Unbound are Æschylean. We realize at once how completely the geniu[s] of Æschylus had dominated Shelley, if we compare the e[x]alted and severe grandeur of many parts of the drama w[ith] the tremulous and sensitive style, most native to Shell[ey's] genius, found in such poems as the Lines in the Eugan[ean] Hills. The Greek drama also affects the English i[n an] exquisite way, through what we may call pictorial sugg[estion]. A poet's imagination deals primarily, not with intel[lectual] abstractions, but with pictures, and it is evident that S[helley's] mind was filled and possessed by the mere imager[y of the Pro]metheus Bound. There is no likeness in the place [of] Io and by Asia; yet surely the picture-elements in [...] helped to create the story of Asia. The vision of [...]ing was in Shelley's mind,—of a woman, question[...] figure, wise with foreknowledge of fate, then pa[...] on her way. Io, like Asia, is stirred and troub[led] by visions of the night; she fares forth on a [...] As Io questions Prometheus, Asia questions [...] In many other ways we seem to trace th[...] [...] at work, though we may not [...] [...] secret workings of the [...]

Sea-nymphs, winging their way upward from the void, and dropping on the cliff beside the Titan (Æschylus, 115–135). He gives us a Vision of Furies, winged shadows, sweeping from the horizon toward the Titan's rock: and again, as the storm disperses, he sees a fairer band. Delicate-winged,

A troop of spirits gather
Like flocks of clouds in Spring's delightful weather.

Many minor suggestions are to be found — some of pictures, some of thoughts, some of mere form and sound of words. By the English refrain of sorrow, we may set a Greek line: —

S., I. L. 23. Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

A., L. 98, 99. φεῦ φεῦ, τὸ παρὸν τό τ' ἐπερχόμενον
πῆμα στενάχω.

And the Greek might be called a paraphrase of the articulated groan of the English. There is a chorus in Æschylus (396–435) which wails with reiterated moaning, sounding the changes in every possible way on the word στένω; and something of the same echoing sorrow is heard through two snatches of earth-chorus in Shelley, I. 107–111, 306–311, where the word "misery," repeated over and over, gives a like effect of lamentation.

"Peace is in the grave," cries Prometheus, when the Furies have released him: —

I am a God, and cannot find it there.

Io passionately calls on Death; and Prometheus with calm majesty replies: —

L. 752. ἦ δυσπετῶς ἂν τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἄθλους φέροις,
ὅτῳ θανεῖν μέν ἐστιν οὐ πεπρωμένον.
αὕτη γὰρ ἦν ἂν πημάτων ἀπαλλαγή.[1]

Compare also, in Æschylus, lines 933, 1053. The thought of the nature and self-inflicted suffering of the tyrant is the same.

To know nor love, nor friend, nor law, to be
Omnipotent but friendless, is to reign,

cries Asia and Prometheus says of the Zeus of Æschylus: —

L. 224. ἔνεστι γάρ πως τοῦτο τῇ τυραννίδι
νόσημα, τοῖς φίλοισι μὴ πεποιθέναι.[2]

When Shelley tells us the Spirits of the Mind

Inhabit, as birds wing the wind,
Its world-surrounding æther,

we remember the musical phrase of Æschylus (281), αἰθέρα ἁγνὸν πόρον οἰωνῶν, "holy æther, path of birds."

Compare also the following passages —

Shelley, I 140-143,	with Æschylus,	311-314
		315, 316
" 375-379,	" "	377, 378
		1002-1006
" 114-119,	" "	228-238

1 Verily,
It would be hard for thee to hear my woe,
For whom it is appointed not to die.
Death frees from woe

2 For kingship wears a cancer at the heart, —
Distrust in friendship.

Shelley,	I.		582, 583 591–593	with	Æschylus,	687–695
"			617, 618	"	"	740–746
"	II.	i.	29, 30	"	"	144, 145
"		iv.	15, 16	"	"	397–401
"	III.	ii.	42, 49 21, 22	"	"	138–140
"		iv.	141	"	"	671, 672 682
"	IV.		93–95	"	"	442–450 546–550

NOTES.

SHELLEY'S PREFACE.

See Mrs. Shelley's Note on the drama for an enlargement of the statements concerning Shelley's aim and conception contained in the Preface, and see a letter written by the poet to his friend Peacock, March 23, 1819, for a wonderful description of the Baths of Caracalla, mentioned in the text, where the drama was composed Many of the letters written to Peacock from Italy have touches of description clearly showing whence the inspiration of the Prometheus Unbound was derived

ACT I

ll 1–73 This first great soliloquy of Prometheus is full of Miltonic echoes. In the union of austere and elevated simplicity with a certain splendor of effect, the blank verse is singularly like that of Paradise Lost.

l 9 *Eyeless in hate* The clause modifies "thou" in the next line

l 30 *Ah me! alas*, etc The first notable example of an irregul line, though other minor instances have already occurred The st dent should carefully trace all metrical irregularities, great and sm in the poem, and should consider their artistic effect Shelley's va tions on the schematic line are one of the chief sources of his mus power

l 31 *The crawling glaciers* The detail of these lines strik enhances the horror of the opening picture The glaciers, cat reflections of the moon in their icy points, are the chains which bin vast form of the Titan to the rock A stupendous image is thu

gested of the scale of the picture, and the duration of Prometheus' torture.

l. 34. *Heaven's wingèd hound.* The only reference in the drama to the vulture of the ancient myth. Shelley discards much of the old machinery of torture. He begins, it is true, with the material sublime and the suggestion of physical agony; almost at once, however, he passes to the more subtle torture of the spirit. See Lanier, Development of the Novel, Chapter V, for an unsympathetic attack on the setting of the drama.

l. 48. *The wingless, crawling hours.* Cf. II. i. 16.

l. 54. *Thro' the wide Heaven.* Forman thinks, though with no authority, that "the" should be omitted.

l. 74. *Thrice three hundred.* The controlled sadness of the soliloquy of Prometheus is relieved by the more impassioned horror of these Voices of Nature, just as the even movement of the blank verse is relieved by the swift, free movement of the lyrics.

l. 108. *Cried 'Misery!' then.* "The convulsion of terror is obviously natural; but wherefore the cry of 'Misery' when the curse smote the fell tyrant of Earth and Heaven, and predicted his fall?" — JAMES THOMSON.

l. 124. *Why scorns the spirit.* There is alienation between the Earth and Prometheus. The old earth-mother speaks to him with an "inorganic voice," which can but convey dim suggestions of a shrouded meaning. Once, blessed with the fellowship of Asia, the *Anima Mundi*, the communion between man and nature has been complete: it is so no longer. Man, tortured and unredeemed, seeks in vain to understand the language of nature. Cf. a like alienation beautifully rendered in Mrs. Browning's Drama of Exile, where the Earth-Spirits reproach Adam and Eve that their sin has separated nature from man.

l. 137. *And love. How cursed I him?* The subject of "love" is of course "I" (l. 136); but the statement seems a little vague and weak. Rossetti proposes an ingenious emendation: "And Jove — how cursed I him?" Forman speaks of the "stagey abruptness" of this reading; Mr. Swinburne also rejects it, but says that it gives us "a reasonable reading in place of one barely explicable."

l. 195. *For know, there are two worlds.* An obscure passage. Perhaps it is foolish to seek for an adequate explanation of this strange

underworld, and we may best ascribe the fancy to the lingering love of magic which so bewitched Shelley's boyhood. The sphere of Memory, of the Imagination, of Platonic archetypes, is vaguely suggested.

l. 222. *My wings are folded.* In these exquisite lyrics, the first poetry of pure beauty in the drama, we meet for the first time the sister-spirits, Ione and Panthea, whose presence soothes the austere agony of the Titan Ione is the forward-looking spirit of Hope; Panthea is the spirit of insight into the universal divine, which, however Shelley would have shrunk from the word, we may best describe as Faith.

l 240 *Why have the secret powers.* There is a fine nemesis in thus causing the Phantasm of Jupiter to repeat the curse. Evil is self-condemned; it pronounces its own doom.

l. 292. *Heap on thy soul* Cf Milton, Paradise Lost, I. 211:—

> "The will
> And high permission of all ruling Heaven
> Left him at large to his own dark designs,
> That with reiterated crimes, he might
> Heap on himself damnation"

This Curse is simply the statement of the inexorable law by which cause works out to effect

l 303 *It doth repent me* In "the superiority of the mind over its own darker passions" implied in Prometheus' recantation of the Curse, Mr Rossetti sees "the beginning of the fall of Jupiter and the unbinding of Prometheus" "Prometheus can expel from the very essence of his being the passions of hatred and revenge , he can discover Jupiter to be an imposture, and can pity instead of hating him, and then Jupiter will sink, an impotent and innocuous bubble, upon the tide of eternity Shelley exhibits to us the human mind at this stage" We must remember that Jupiter derives all his power from Prometheus Rossetti regards him as the anthropomorphic God, created by the mind of man, and tyrannizing over its creator, but surely the myth is quite as much political as theological See Introduction

l 306 *Misery, Oh misery* From the order of natural law, with its unfailing nemesis, Prometheus has escaped into the higher order of forgiveness. The Earth, with merely natural understanding, feels that he who forgives is vanquished.

l. 313. *Fallen and vanquishèd.* We have here the first instance of the ethereal chorus-voices which sound through the poem and enhance the vastness of the action by suggesting the mysterious sympathy of all creation. "The world in which the action is supposed to move rings with spirit-voices; and what these spirits sing is melody more purged of mortal dross than any other poet's ear has caught, while listening to his own heart's song, or to the rhythms of the world." — SYMONDS.

l. 314. *Fear not.* Notice throughout the different functions of the two attendant spirits. Ione, the embodiment of Hope, is first to see. She beholds, describes, and questions. Panthea, the brooding spirit of Faith, interprets. Cf. I. 579–590; II. iv. 404–410; IV. 30–40, 185–190.

l. 340. *The hope of torturing him.* Note the horrible dramatic appropriateness of the simile, on the lips of Fury. All the figures used in connection with the Furies should be noted.

l. 382. *I gave all He has.* "This Jupiter, the 'Prince of this world,' the embodiment of tyranny, false religion, evil custom, is, in his most familiar form, 'the letter that killeth' — authority, orthodoxy, the petrified dogma, which hinders the play of free thought . . . as Prometheus is 'the spirit that giveth life.'" — TODHUNTER.

l. 431. *Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene.* Cf. Comus, 372, 373: —

> "Virtue could see to do what virtue would
> By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
> Were in the flat sea sunk."

Also the Faerie Queene, I. ii. 12: —

> "Virtue gives herself light, through darkness for to wade."

l. 442. *Blackening the birth of day.* The horrible formlessness of the Furies has both an æsthetic and a symbolic value. Cf. lines 465–470.

l. 484. *Thou think'st we will live thro' thee.* This passage suggests the nearest approach to the consciousness of Sin to be found in the drama.

l. 540. *The pale stars of the morn.* Here begins the central Agony of Prometheus. The Furies tear asunder the veil that separates present from future, and reveal to the Titan, hanging upon his cliff, visions of

the two central tragedies (as conceived by Shelley) of the world's history. The first Vision is of the Crucifixion of Christ; the second, of the French Revolution. The sting of the torture is found in the suggestion that these great events, however much of heroism and self-sacrifice they imply, resulted in injury rather than benefit to humanity. The Furies, spirits of negation, instead of seeing a soul of goodness in things evil, see a soul of evil in all things good.

l. 542. *Dost thou faint, mighty Titan?* The Furies tempt Prometheus to despair by suggesting that the aspiration he has awakened in man is a curse rather than a blessing because destined to remain forever unfulfilled. This attitude towards aspiration is that of the pessimist. It marks much of our modern poetry, from Arnold to Swinburne, but finds a noble converse in the message of Browning. Cf. with these lines Swinburne, in the Atalanta in Calydon:—

> "Thou hast given man sleep, but smitten sleep with dreams,
> Saying 'joy is not, but love of joy shall be.'
> Thou hast made sweet springs to all our pleasant streams,
> In the end thou hast made them bitter with the sea."

See also William Blake's Human Abstract.

l. 584. *Alas! I looked forth twice.* Faith and Hope veil their faces, and Prometheus endures unaided. It is notable that this climax of th

l. 619. *In each human heart.* It is notable that this climax of the torture is expressed in dull blank verse, and consists in a simple sta ment of commonplace fact. Is there an artistic error here?

l. 673. *From unremembered ages.* As the Furies turn all good evil, so these gentle Spirits of the Human Mind bring consolation singing that all evil is the occasion for higher good. The first sir Courage even in defeat, the second of Self-sacrifice, imposs suffering were not. The third and fourth chant of Wisdom and nation, the two powers of hope.

l. 708. *Which begins and ends in thee.* E.g. "in the pow constitution of the human mind." — ROSSETTI.

l. 738. *On a poet's lips I slept.* This exquisite little lyric called the fullest expression of poetic idealism. It calls to once many passages from the poems of Emerson. The lyrics w

l. 753. *Behold'st thou not two shapes.*

are "dainty but obscure." It is clear at least, however, that these two spirits bring the healing power of Sympathy. Like the Furies, they fully recognize the evil in the world; unlike the Furies, they do not gloat over it, but lament it. The consolation offered Prometheus has no unreal element; it never transcends the limits of truth.

l. 805. *The résponses.* Often so accented by Shelley. Cf. II. i. 171.

ACT II. Scene I.

l. 35. *Pardon, great Sister!* "Panthea is the perpetual messenger of love between Prometheus and his divine consort, as Faith is between the genius of man and its ideal. . . . Shelley has here made English blank verse the native language of elemental genii." — Todhunter.

l. 62. *But in the other.* This is the Dream of Fulfilment. The mystical poetry suggests the time when Faith shall be lost in sight, as Panthea feels her being absorbed in the life of Prometheus.

l. 68. *At his feet I slept.* When do these dreams come to Panthea? If we attempt to observe consistent chronology we must say, during the Temptation of Prometheus; and it is beautiful to think that even while Humanity suffers most, Faith is visited by fair visions of its future triumph. Yet Panthea does not seem asleep during this period, though she hides her eyes. She looks forth twice at least. After all, the drama takes place in that spiritual region where ideas of succession cannot enter. "Its date is of course in an ideal æon, beyond the range of chronology, unimpeached by anachronism, so that, notwithstanding the antiquity of the *dramatis personæ* and fable, the catastrophe points to a far apocalyptic future, and the allusions to the most recent discoveries of science are just as much in place as those to prehistoric traditions." — James Thomson.

l. 83. *And like the vapours.* The similes drawn from Nature throughout this wonderful scene should be collected and carefully studied. The close and minute accuracy of Shelley's observation will become no less apparent than his sensitiveness to the poetry of nature.

l. 119. *There is a change.* Only in the eyes of Faith, can Love behold the vision of Humanity triumphant.

l. 131. *Follow! follow!* From the point of the appearance of the

Dream of Progress to the end of the scene Nature becomes, as it were, progressively spiritualized. In the first soliloquy of Asia, its marvellous loveliness is still external if not sensuous; but in the latter part of the scene, Shelley's Hegelian conception of the gradual evolution of spiritual consciousness in the natural world finds free symbolic expression.

l. 141. *As you speak.* First nature, then faith, voice the same summons.

l. 166 *Echoes we listen!* These Echoes are of course spiritual nature-voices, undefined not, as Todhunter strangely conjectures, the voice of primeval Hope, or Ione, lingering in the craggy caverns of the world.

SCENE II.

These lyrics can be compared to nothing in the range of English poetry except Keats's Ode to a Nightingale They are not only, however, nature-poems. they have a symbolic meaning which can be neglected when they are enjoyed away from their connection, but which adds to their interest when the drama is taken as a whole. Love and Faith are pursuing their journey through all human experience: and first they pass through the sphere of the Senses, or external life (Semichorus I.), then through that of the Emotions (Semichorus II.) finally, through that of the Reason and the Will (Semichorus III.).

l. 209. *The path thro' which* The interwoven rhyme-scheme sho be traced by the student, that one source of the linked sweetness of lyric may be understood

l. 258 *And wakes the destined* Shelley's fatalism, the doctrine un lying this lyric, rather injures the poetry, rendering it obscure abstruse The "fatal mountain" is probably that to which Pa and Asia are advancing, and where we find them at the beginn the next scene

l. 278 *I have heard those* This passage is a perfect little f in itself. Indeed, the whole dialogue of the Fauns is like a interlude.

SCENE III

Is the dawn in which we here find ourselves that of the lar? According to Thomson, it is impossible t

Perhaps the journey of Asia and Panthea has lasted through twenty-four (dramatic) hours; perhaps it has taken place in a moment of time. Thomson thinks that the scene in the Cave of Demogorgon, the overthrow of Jupiter and the transfiguration of Asia, all occur in the darkest hour of the night, just before the dawn. There are some expressions which seem to bear out this theory; yet it is hard to think of the descent into Demogorgon's Cave, and the colloquy between him and Asia as occupying all day and the greater part of the night. See note, II. iv. 557. There may be one sunrise, or two, or three. The first in the Indian vale; the second, here; the third, replaced by Asia's transfiguration, Scene V. But the position taken by the present writer is that, whatever obscure time-intimations may be found, Shelley's intention was to fix the mind on central points in the sequence of the one great cosmic day. See Introduction.

l. 316. *Fit throne for such a Power!* "Here Asia speaks rather as a mortal maiden might than in her own character." — TODHUNTER.

l. 341. *Hark! the rushing snow!* With this superb avalanche, compare another, equally fine, in Browning's Saul: —

> "Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes straight to the aim,
> And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held (he alone,
> While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust of stone
> A year's snow bound about for a breastplate, — leaves grasp of the sheet?
> Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his feet,
> And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your mountain of old,
> With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold."

l. 348. *Look how the gusty sea.* Suspense and gradual suggestion are admirably used in this passage to prepare us for a great event.

l. 359. *To the deep, to the deep.* We have left the phenomenal world behind us, and are on the heights of pure mysticism, whence we are to be carried downward to the abysses of absolute being "where there is one pervading, one alone." This descent of Asia recalls Faust's descent to the Mothers, in the second part of Faust.

l. 399. *Such strength is in meekness.* These lines make it clear that Asia is not only a spectator, but an agent in the redemption of humanity. The power of Demogorgon can be set free only when Love has attained to utter self-abnegation.

SCENE IV.

l. 405. *I see a mighty darkness.* The treatment of Demogorgon cannot be called a great nor a consistent success; yet it is by a fine *tour de force* that Shelley makes us feel, even as clearly as he does, the presence of a spirit which is described entirely by negations.

l. 415. *Who made that sense.* These exquisite lines are deficient in grammatical construction. Rossetti changes "when" to "at." Forman suggests "hear" for "or."

l. 431. *He reigns.* The slight variations in Demogorgon's answers to these questions should be carefully noted.

l. 435. *There was the Heaven.* This long passage, with its reminiscences of the traditional Golden Age, and its picture of a highly elaborate civilization, seems somewhat inconsistent with the general tenor of the myth, yet it corresponds to Shelley's idea of Jupiter, as the petrifaction of the earlier customs and faith of primitive humanity into rigid and tyrannous law.

l. 503. *Who rains down.* It is doubtful whether this word should be "reigns" or "rains": the two readings give very different sense. The reading here adopted is that of Mrs. Shelley and of Rossetti.

l. 517. *If the abysm.* The punctuation here given is that of Rossetti's edition.

l. 523. *But eternal Love.* This line and a half is the quiet statement in abstract terms of the central theme elsewhere expressed through glowing symbol. The message is the same as that of Tennyson, who begins his In Memoriam with the invocation,—

> "Strong Son of God, Immortal Love."

It is the same as that of Browning, who exclaims,—

> "Love, which on earth, amid all the shows of it
> Has ever been known the sole good of life in it,
> That love, ever growing here, spite of the strife in it
> Shall arise, made perfect, from Death's repose of it."

Yet the thought of Shelley stops short of the thought of the Victorian poets, in that to him Love remains simply a universally diffused and abstract emotion, while to them it is embodied in a Personality.

l. 532. *The rocks are cloven.* This marvellous picture of color and light in motion could, as all critics agree, have been adequately rendered only by the pencil of William Blake. Mr. Walter Crane has an interesting attempt to render the scene. He gives the impression of speed and of forms born of the viewless wind, but misses the impression of beauty.

l. 557. *Watch its path among the stars.* These lines, and the preceding l. 537, lend plausibility to the theory that we are in the depth of night, and that many hours have elapsed since Asia and Panthea were swept downward to the abode of Demogorgon. The student should consider the problem in the light of passages like II. v. 587; III. ii. 85, 123. The passages in the present scene may be easily understood and the imaginative power of the scene heightened, if we conceive Asia and Panthea gazing upward to the sky through darkness so profound that the stars are revealed even in the morning light. This phenomenon is frequently seen in mines.

SCENE V.

l. 578. *On the brink.* A sense of breathless speed is imparted by the break in this lyric and the swift change of scene, as well as by the abrupt omission of the last line in the concluding stanza.

l. 587. *The sun will rise not.* A bit of Shelleyan mysticism, inconsistent with the general progress of the cosmic day (cf. II. i.), but suggestive of the suspension of mere physical light in the presence of the Light of Love.

l. 589. *As the aërial hue.* The figure recalls one curiously similar in I. 465; yet as in that the beauty enhanced horror by contrast, so here it enhances beauty by likeness — thus illustrating two great principles of æsthetics.

l. 597. *The Nereids tell.* See various versions of the Birth of Aphrodite: in particular Chaucer's Knightes Tale, Tennyson's Princess, and Swinburne's Hymn to Proserpine: —

"The statue of Venus, glorious for to see
Was naked, fletyng in the large sea;
. . . .
A citole in hire right hond hadde sche,
And on hire heed, ful semely for to see
A rose garland fresh and wel smellyng,
Above hire heed her dowves flikeryng."

idealism by melody, muses upon the indefinable possibilities of existence prænatal and præterlethal — the world of spirit before birth and after death." — ROSSETTI. The poem suggests the passage of the weary nature back through age, maturity, youth, and childhood, till it enters the eternal sphere.

This scene of the Apotheosis of Asia recalls to us the Marriage Feast in the first book of the Faerie Queene, where Una, having laid aside her mourning, comes forth in silver-white, and dazzles all men by

> "The blazing brightness of her beauties' beame,
> And glorious light of her sunshyny face."
> — F. Q., I. xii. 23.

It recalls also those far greater scenes — greater than anything in Spenser or Shelley — where Dante beholds in Paradise his Lady Beatrice: —

"Now were my eyes fixed again upon the countenance of my Lady, and my mind with them, and from every other interest it was withdrawn; and she was not smiling, but, 'If I should smile,' she began to me, 'thou wouldest become such as Semele was when she became ashes; for my beauty, which along the stairs of the eternal palace is kindled the more, as thou hast seen the higher it ascends, is so resplendent that, if it were not tempered, at its effulgence thy mortal power would be as a bough shattered by thunder.'" — Paradiso, XXI. See also Purgatorio, XXX., XXXI.; Paradiso, I., V., XIV., XVIII., XXI., XXIII., XXVI., XXVII., XXXI.

ACT III. SCENE I.

l. 36. *Thetis, bright image.* "Thetis, like Asia a child of Ocean, is her false counterpart. . . . She is a type of the false ideal, the sham love and reverence which tyrants exact from their slaves. . . . She is glory — the tinsel happiness of the vain and selfish, which the vulgar envy." — TODHUNTER.

l. 40. *The Numidian seps.* The seps is a species of serpent whose bite entails swift mortification. The allusion is to the soldier Sabellus who, as is told in Lucan's Pharsalia, IX., died in horrible torment from the effect of the bite.

1 [illegible]

1 [illegible] —

"[illegible]
[illegible]"

1 [illegible] the Fall of [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

1 [illegible] passage in [illegible] which he [illegible] —

"[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]"

1 94. [illegible] to the west[illegible] the single [illegible] serene image of a great and solitary soul. —

"Wakeful he sits, and lonely, and unmoved,
Beyond the arrows, views, or shouts of men;
As oftentimes an eagle, ere the sun
Throws o'er the varying earth his early ray,
Stands solitary, stands immovable
Upon some highest cliff, and rolls his eye,
Clear, constant, unobservant, unabashed,
In the cold light above the dews of morn."
— Count Julian, V. ii.

l. 109. Cf. Shelley, Lines on the Euganean Hills, 320–326.

Scene III.

l. 134. *Most glorious.* Hercules — imported from the old myth — has the slightest possible share in the action. Shelley always recognized reluctantly the part which brute force plays in human life.

l. 139. *Asia, thou light of life.* "She is the Idea of Beauty Incarnate, the shadow of the Light of Life which sustains the world and enkindles it with love, the reality of Alastor's vision, the breathing image of the 'awful loveliness' apostrophied in the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, the reflex of the splendour of which Adonais was a part. . . . The essential thought of Shelley's creed was that the universe is penetrated, vitalized, made real by a spirit, which he sometimes called the spirit of Nature, but which is always conceived as more than Life, as that which gives its actuality to Life, and therefore as Love and Beauty. To adore this spirit, to clasp it with affection and to blend with it, is, he thought, the true object of man. Therefore, the final union of Prometheus with Asia is the consummation of human destinies." — SYMONDS.

l. 143. *There is a cave,* etc. In this long description, as was pointed out in the Introduction, Shelley descends to a merely pastoral prettiness and betrays something of the luscious sentimentality which characterized his first boyish work. It is almost comprehensible that the Shelley who wrote this passage could have written those nightmare-compounds of melodrama and sentiment, Zastrozzi and St. Irvyne.

l. 157. *Ourselves unchanged.* No Victorian poet, writing when science had revealed the secret of development, could have written this line with complacency.

l. 173. *And hither come.* Lines as melodious as the famous ones in Tennyson's Princess: —

> "The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
> And murmuring of innumerable bees."

Himera and Enna are towns in Sicily; near the latter is the flowery vale whence Persephone was carried off by Dis to the under world.

l. 184. *Whence the forms.* Literal interpretation of this passage is difficult, but it evidently implies Shelley's Platonic idealism. In his philosophy, the only reality is in the mind, and thence proceed, not only all the forms of art, but the whole external world. We remember, in reading the passage, how profoundly he was impressed by the ancient statues at Rome

l. 195. *Veil by veil.* Man being entirely passive during the process.

l. 203. *This is the mystic shell* "Sir Guyon de Shelley," says Hogg, "one of the most famous of the Paladins, carried about with him three conches. . . When he made the third conch, the golden one, vocal, the law of God was immediately exalted, and the law of the devil annulled and abrogated wherever the potent sound reached. Was Shelley thinking of this golden conch when he described, in his great poem, that mystic shell from which is sounded the trumpet-blast of universal freedom?" — H. S. SALT Most interpretations of this shell are painfully arbitrary; and perhaps we may as well enjoy the beauty of the poetry, for once, without worrying out a meaning

l. 218. *Thy lips are on me.* A few lines here show a fine exercise of the mythic power. If Mother Earth could speak, such language would she use.

l. 246 *Death is the veil* Here is the limit at which Shelley gives up the attempt to solve the final enigmas He is very fond of this expression. It occurs again in one of his few sonnets, and on one occasion, when he was nearly drowned, these words were the first he uttered on regaining consciousness.

l. 257 *There is a cavern* Is this the Cave Prometheus has just spoken of? And is the Temple beside it identical with the one mentioned in l. 294? Seemingly not, but the confusion is hopeless Yet "the unessential self-contradictions and inadvertencies are not only pardonable as instances of the *brave* neglect which Pope here and there

discovered in Homer, but have a certain wild charm of their ow characteristics proving that in Shelley the poet and the man were We all know how conspicuous in his life was a sort of quasi-free from the limitations of time and space." — THOMSON.

l. 292. *Crystàlline pool.* Often so accented by Shelley. Cf. to the West Wind: —

> "Lulled by the coil of his crystàlline streams."

SCENE IV.

l. 314. *It is the delicate spirit.* This spirit has been likene Goethe's Euphorion, in the second part of Faust, although of cou has a wider meaning than the poet-child of Faust and Helena. Th half inorganic Gaia, the crude material earth, is replaced, now tha harmony of man and nature has been restored, by this dainty and rational spirit, who, childish at first, grows into swift maturity of in gence and love by the end of Act IV.

l. 327. *As one bit by a dipsas.* A kind of serpent whose bite inv a deadly thirst.

l. 363. *Amid the moonlight.* Seemingly another anachronism. Spirit of the Earth wanders through night and dawn, and returns b the Spirit of the Hour, who yet was to "outspeed the sun."

l. 418. *Pasturing flowers.* This very poor line would read intelligibly were we authorized to insert "on" after "pasturing."

l. 427. *Amphisbenic snake.* A snake with a head at each en capable of moving either way.

l. 433. *It was, as it is still.* This most characteristic line, sta one with sudden brightness in the midst of a dull passage, seen express the very secret of Shelley's nature.

l. 472. *Thrones, altars,* etc. This passage, to line 487, has endlessly discussed. It is doubtless very obscure. It is probably to take the word "imaged" in l. 481 as a past tense, with Rossett Forman, instead of a participle, with Swinburne. The general se clear: that the monuments of our present civilization, secular sacred, will be to a regenerate humanity mere memorials of an out past, as the monuments of ancient civilization are to us to-day.

l. 506. *Passionless; no.* The punctuation here adopted is th Rossetti.

ACT IV.

The Fourth Act was an afterthought, composed at Florence a few months after the rest of the drama. The action proper was of course concluded with the end of the Third Act: yet we have had a consciousness throughout that not only the immediate personages but the entire universe of living forces were involved in the issue, and the union of Prometheus and Asia, as well as the general statements of the Third Act, leave us unsatisfied We demand some expression of rapture from those chorus-voices which have lent so much charm to each stage of the poem. The Fourth Act, that great symphony of rejoicing, where all voices of nature and of the mind sing their triumph, is thus no arbitrary addition, but an essential fulfilment of the artistic and spiritual unity of the drama

"It is difficult to speak highly enough of the fourth act so far as lyrical fervor and lambent play of imagination are concerned, both of them springing from ethical enthusiasm It is the combination of these which makes this act the most surprising structure of lyrical faculty, sustained at an almost uniform pitch through a very considerable length of verse, that I know of in any literature One ought perhaps to except certain passages, taken collectively, in Dante's Paradiso These are doubtless quite as intense and quite as beautiful, and are even more moving, as being blended with a definite creed, and the heights and depths of emotion, personal and historical, which throb along with that. Shelley's theme has no such inner pulse of association; it becomes therefore all the more arduous and crucial an attempt." — WILLIAM ROSSETTI

The last Act is "the most sublime hymn ever uttered to the glory of the eternal harmony of nature, as apprehended by the human soul in communion with her" — F RABBE.

The Act falls into three great divisions, with transitions marked by the comments of Ione and Panthea, who still retain their rôle of interpreters. In the first third, the Hours, past and future, and the Spirits of the Human Mind join in joyful choruses of thankful glee The second part gives us a grand antiphon of rejoicing between the Spirit of the Earth and of the Moon Finally, Demogorgon, the Power no longer of Destruction but of Life, solemnly invokes dead and living

spirits to listen to his words; and when in answering music the[y] their presence, and we feel the harmony of the redeemed e[arth] speaking through their words, he utters in cadence grave and his final message, and the final message of Shelley.

l. 1. *The pale stars are gone!* The music of these first l[ines] tripping, delicate, and light — almost *too* light, indeed, if we remember that it is a prelude to the graver harmony that follows

l. 12. *Spectres we:* This faint strain of minor music lea[ds ex]quisitely into the glorious fulness of triumphant song. The mind will find it difficult to understand how Time can be "borne tomb in Eternity" while the Earth and Moon yet circle rou[nd the] Sun; but the poetry is none the less beautiful because the symb[ols are] mixed.

l. 54. *With the thunder of gladness.* "Mr. Rossetti has sug[gested] the substitution of *madness* for gladness here, to get a instead of an echo. The proposed reading has all to recomm[end it] except authority and necessity." — FORMAN.

l. 60. *Oh, below the deep.* The broken cadences and reper[cussive] notes should be carefully noted through all the Act. They add to the wild freedom and charm of the melody.

l. 116. *His Dædal wings.* A favorite epithet with Shelle[y. Cf.] III. i. 26; IV. 416. These Spirits of the Human Mind are of the same who brought consolation to Prometheus in Act I. The[y are] now at last free to soar through all the universe with the frank [...]cism of children. Compare Walt Whitman's lines: —

> "'O my brave soul! O farther, farther sail!
> O daring joy, but safe! Are they not all the seas of God?
> O farther, farther, farther sail.'

The swallow-like flight of these spirits, which seem to pass and before the reader's eyes, gleaming, vanishing, and then gleaming is subtly suggested by the airy freaks and changes of their son[gs."] TODHUNTER.

l. 163. *Ceaseless, and rapid.* The brief and irregular song which we have had so far now merge into an anapæstic verse[move]ment, even and smooth from the very intensity of its swiftness.

l. 181. *As the bare green hill.* One of the wonderfully lovely

vignettes, perfect in a few lines, which abound in the Fourth Act. The sweet little touch of earthly, homely beauty affords rest and relief after the spirit-music to which our ears have become attuned.

l. 186. *'Tis the deep music.* This speech, with the following speech of Ione, may be understood to describe the melody of the drama. Study the difference in tone-color in the two speeches.

l. 194. *But see where.* Through this description, we are in full mysticism. Perhaps the grand duet to follow would be more effective if introduced by less elaborate machinery.

l. 202. *By ebbing night.* Mr. Thomson points out that the epithet is incorrectly used, and compares the correct use in III. ii. 111. Cf. the Triumph of Life, 77–84.

l. 219. *White its countenance.* The intense shining of these lines is wonderful.

l. 221. Rossetti proposes to amend: "Its feathers are as plumes of sunny frost," thus making the line metrically correct. Perhaps it is fantastic to feel a certain charm in the hovering movement of the line as it stands.

l. 236. *And from the other.* This mystical vision of the Earth, with the Spirit sleeping at its heart, is hard to understand, but marvellous in suggestion.

l. 242. *Purple and azure.* This text conforms to Shelley's original edition, and to Mr. Swinburne's preference, in omitting the "and" inserted by Rossetti and Forman between "white" and "green."

l. 245. *Such as ghosts dream.* A fine instance of the tenuity of Shelley's imagination.

l. 281. *Valueless.* Meaning, of course, by a usage common in Shelley, "beyond all value."

l. 282. *Crystalline.* See note, III. iii. 292.

l. 287. *The beams flash on.* Shelley's curious cosmology, in the remainder of this speech, would hardly commend itself to a modern geologist. According to him, the remains of ancient civilizations are seemingly buried in the deepest strata of the earth, while above them lie the fossils of antediluvian monsters, with behemoth and the winged alligator on top. But let us not be too literal.

ll. 319–502. *The duet between Earth and Moon.* Who are the speakers? Mr. Forman considers them to be the Spirit of the Earth

l. 367. *Wingèd clouds.* The poetry of science.

l. 370. *It interpenetrates.* In the preceding stanza, the Earth has expressed its exultation in the fall of evil, it now proceeds to chant the glory of the new freedom wrought by love. "Love" is the subject of the sentence to line 380, and again of lines 385–387. The punctuation is seemingly obscure

l. 394. *Man, oh, not men!* A curious expression, in which Shelley seems to anticipate the socialistic conception of humanity as a complete organism rather than an aggregate of separate units

l. 400. *Man, one harmonious.* The next four stanzas are a glorious pæan of humanity. The first two stanzas deal with man's nature; the last two with his power over art, language, the natural world. The concluding stanza reads like a prophecy, which the scientific discoveries during the fifty years following Shelley's life went far to fulfil, but which is not yet accomplished perfectly.

l. 432 *Half unfrozen* In Shelley's own edition, "half-infrozen." Mr. Rossetti adopts Shelley's reading.

l. 457. *Thou art speeding* Notice the trochees. This is the most wonderful instance of that use of scientific fact for imaginative purposes which makes the treatment of nature in this Act of the Prometheus Unbound startling in its modernness. Few instances of this peculiar mode of handling occur in the earlier Acts, it almost seems as if a prophetic power had descended on Shelley as he wrote of the future harmony between Man and Nature.

l. 493. *And the weak day weeps.* Mr Rossetti assigns these two lines to the Moon; there is, however, no authority for the reading, and we may better consider the passage as a last and most exquisite instance of the free and broken music which we have found throughout the drama.

Concerning this *duo between* Earth and Moon, M. Rabbe, Shelley's able French biographer, writes "Michelet in La Mer has written like a poet of the symphony of worlds of which science is endeavoring to read the score, of the mathematical relation of the stars between themselves, which are the harmonic intervals of the celestial music 'The Earth,' he says, 'in her tides, greater and less, speaks to her sisters the planets. Do they reply? We must believe they do From their fluid elements they too must rise up, conscious of the impulse of

the Earth. Mutual attraction, the bent of each planet to come forth from its egoism, must be the cause of sublime dialogues in the heavens. Unfortunately, the ear of man hears but the least part of these.'

"Shelley heard one of these dialogues, and has marvellously rendered it for us in the Fourth Act of the Prometheus Unbound."

l. 519. *Thou, Earth.* The grave and quiet music from this point to the end reminds us of the organ-like harmony of the Ode to the West Wind.

l. 537. *Or as they.* There is pathos in this expression of Shelley's vague and pantheistic faith. Concerning the future of man on earth, his conviction is ardently clear; concerning that beyond the grave, he can but suggest a dismal and meaningless alternative.

l. 554. *This is the day.* The concluding lyric of the drama surprises us by its soberness. After the wild rapture of the central lyrics, this music sounds subdued and sad; after the vision of redeemed humanity, these words take us again, it seems, into the world of conflict and pain. It is better so. Perhaps the very last stanza, with its suggestion of meekness, constancy, and hope triumphant even in despair, touches the highest spiritual level in the whole great drama.

EXTRACTS FROM CRITICISMS O
METHEUS UNBOUND.

[The following extracts aim to give the student some idea of th
criticism on the drama. There is an instructive contrast between t
earlier and the later criticism.]

"To our apprehensions, Prometheus is little else but absol
and were we not assured to the contrary, we should take it
that the author was lunatic — as his principles are lu
and his poetry a mélange of nonsense, cockneyism, povert
antry" — *Literary Gazette, September 9, 1820.*

"Whatever may be the difference of men's opinions conc
measure of Mr. Shelley's poetical power, there is one point i
which all must be agreed, and that is his audacity. . . . I
highly absurd to deny that this gentleman has manifeste
traordinary powers of language and imagination in his treat
allegory, however grossly and miserably he may have tried
its purpose and meaning. But of this more anon. In the
what can be more deserving of reprobation than the course
allowing his intellect to take, and that too at a time when h
be laying the foundations of a lasting and honourable name
no occasion for going about the bush to hint what the poet h
so unblushingly and sinfully blazoned forth in every part of h
tion. With him, it is quite evident that Jupiter, whose do
been predicted by Prometheus, means nothing more than
general, that is, every human system of religious belief; and
the fall of this, he considers it perfectly necessary (as inde
believe, though with far different feelings) that every system
government also should give way and perish. . . . In short,
impossible that there should exist a more pestiferous mixtu

phemy, sedition, and sensuality, than is visible in the whole structure and strain of this poem — which, nevertheless, and notwithstanding all the detestation its principles excite, must and will be considered by all that read it attentively, as abounding in poetical beauties of the highest order — as presenting many specimens not easily to be surpassed, of the moral sublime of eloquence — as overflowing with pathos, and most magnificent in description. Where can be found a spectacle more worthy of sorrow than such a man performing and glorying in the performance of such things?" — *Blackwood's, September, 1820.*

"In Mr. Shelley's poetry, all is brilliance, vacuity, and confusion. We are dazzled by the multitude of words which sound as if they denoted something very grand or splendid: fragments of images pass in crowds before us; but when the procession has gone by, and the tumult of it is over, not a trace of it remains upon the memory. The mind, fatigued and perplexed, is mortified by the consciousness that its labour has not been rewarded by the acquisition of a single distinct conception; the ear, too, is dissatisfied; for the rhythm of the verse is often harsh and unmusical; and both the ear and the understanding are disgusted by new and uncouth words, and by the awkward and intricate construction of the sentences. The predominating characteristic of Mr. Shelley's poetry, however, is its frequent and total want of meaning." — *"Shelley: Prometheus Unbound," Quarterly Review, October, 1821.*

"In Prometheus Unbound Shelley's faith in the ultimate triumph of good found its most complete and ideal expression. He no longer, as in The Revolt of Islam blends truth with fiction; scene, stage, and actors are in unison. The harmony shows the intellectual accuracy and sense of fitness which Shelley was developing. The lyrical drama is by no means faultless, and unfortunately for its popularity, the faults lie thickest at the outset. But if the reader perseveres, he will be swept upward in a whirlwind of song from height to height, till he reaches a dizzy summit of lyric inspiration where no foot but Shelley's ever trod before. The grandeur of the conception, the vivid embodiment in beautiful form of inspiring dreams, the majestic soliloquy of Prometheus with which the play opens, the exquisite speech of Asia, are forgotten in the music of the lyric outbursts, which send a sob of

hopeless anguish echoing down the slopes of Caucasus, or convey in sparkling words the arrowy summons to delight of a fresh spring morning, or express with the most deft and unobtrusive harmony of words the thrilling intensity of the passion of love. Yet the drama is finely conceived and firmly compacted. It cannot be fairly condemned because it is wanting in solidity, since its very essence is incorporeal, elemental, ideal. In imaginative realization and creative energy, Prometheus Unbound is a masterly achievement." — *"The Character of Shelley," Quarterly Review, April, 1557.*

"A genuine liking for Prometheus Unbound may be reckoned the touch-stone of a man's capacity for understanding lyric poetry." — *J. A. Symonds.*

"There is, I suppose, no poem comparable, in the fair sense of that word, to Prometheus Unbound. The immense scale and boundless scope of the conception, the marble majesty and extra-mundane passions of the personages, the sublimity of ethical aspiration, the radiance of ideal and poetic beauty which saturates every phase of the subject, and almost (as it were) wraps it from sight at times, and transforms it out of sense into spirit, the rolling river of great sound and lyrical rapture, form a combination not to be matched elsewhere, and scarcely to encounter competition. There is another source of greatness in this poem, neither to be foolishly lauded, nor (still less) undervalued. It is this: that Prometheus Unbound, however remote the foundation of its subject matter, and unactual its executive treatment, does in reality express the most modern of conceptions — the utmost reach of speculation of a mind which burst up all crusts of custom and prescription like a volcano, and imaged forth a future wherein man should be indeed the autocrat and renovated renovator of his planet. This it is, I apprehend, which places Prometheus clearly, instead of disputably, at the summit of all later poetry: the fact that it embodies in forms of truly ecstatic beauty, the dominant passion of the dominant intellects of the age, and especially of one of the extremest and loftiest among them all, the author himself. It is the ideal poem of perfectibility and triumphant progression — the Atlantis of Man Emancipated." — *"Memoir of Shelley," William M. Rossetti.*

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